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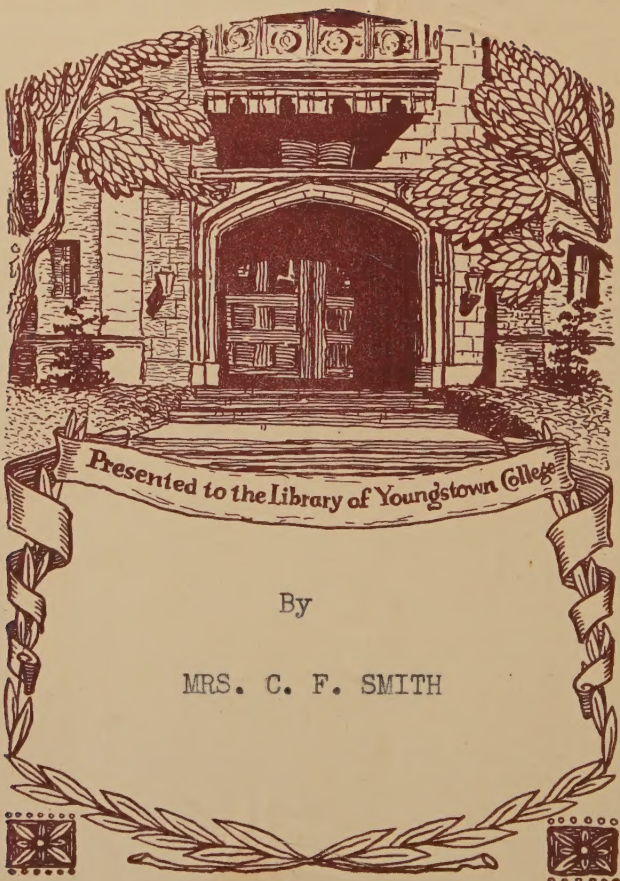

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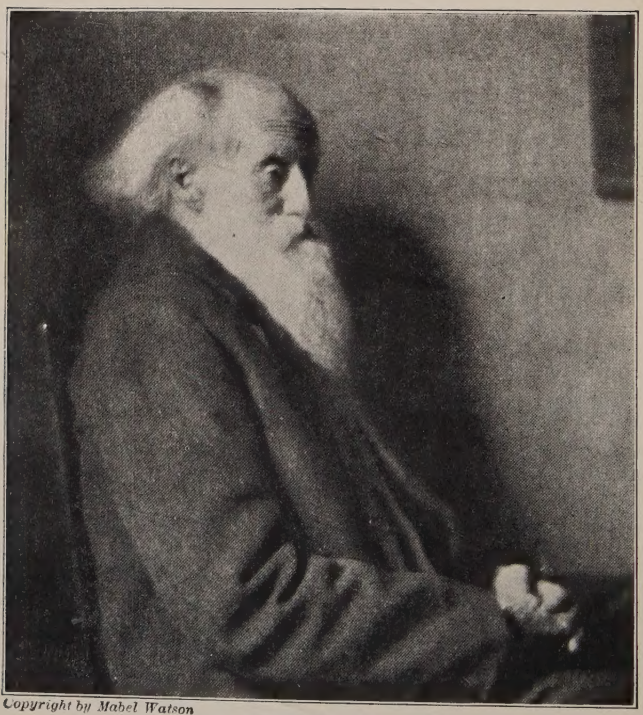

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The Complete Writings
OF
JOHN BURROUGHS

Wake-Robin Edition

Vol. XXIII
THE LAST HARVEST

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But who is he with modest looks
And clad in homely russet brown?
He murmurs near the running brooks
A music sweeter than their own.

He is retired as noontide dew,
Or fountain in a noon-day grove;
And you must love him, ere to you
He will seem worthy of your love.

The outward shows of sky and earth,
Of hill and valley, he has viewed;
And impulses of deeper birth
Have come to him in solitude.

In common things that round us lie
Some random truths he can impart —
The harvest of a quiet eye
That broods and sleeps on his own heart.

WORDSWORTH

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PREFACE

Most of the papers garnered here were written after fourscore years — after the heat and urge of the day — and are the fruit of a long life of observation and meditation.

The author's abiding interest in Emerson is shown in his close and eager study of the Journals during these later years. He hungered for everything that concerned the Concord Sage, who had been one of the most potent influences in his life. Although he could discern flies in the Emersonian amber, he could not brook slight or indifference toward Emerson in the youth of to-day. Whatever flaws he himself detected, he well knew that Emerson would always rest secure on the pedestal where long ago he placed him. Likewise with Thoreau: If shortcomings were to be pointed out in this favorite, he wished to be the one to do it. And so, before taking Thoreau to task for certain inaccuracies, he takes Lowell to task for criticizing Thoreau. He then proceeds, not without evident satisfaction, to call attention to Thoreau's "slips" as an observer and reporter of nature; yet in no carping spirit, but, as he himself has said: "Not that I love Thoreau less, but that I love truth more."

The "Short Studies in Contrasts," the "Day by

Day" notes, "Gleanings," and the "Sundown Papers" which comprise the latter part of this, the last, posthumous volume by John Burroughs, were written during the closing months of his life. Contrary to his custom, he wrote these usually in the evening, or, less frequently, in the early morning hours, when, homesick and far from well, with the ceaseless pounding of the Pacific in his ears, and though incapable of the sustained attention necessary for his best work, he was nevertheless impelled by an unwonted mental activity to seek expression.

If the reader misses here some of the charm and power of his usual writing, still may he welcome this glimpse into what John Burroughs was doing and thinking during those last weeks before the illness came which forced him to lay aside his pen.

CLARA BARRUS

WOODCHUCK LODGE
ROXBURY-IN-THE-CATSKILLS

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The frontispiece portrait is from a photograph by Miss Mabel Watson taken at Pasadena, California, shortly before Mr. Burroughs's death

THE LAST HARVEST

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I

EMERSON AND HIS JOURNALS

I

EMERSON'S fame as a writer and thinker was firmly established during his lifetime by the books he gave to the world. His Journals, published over a quarter of a century after his death, nearly or quite double the bulk of his writing, and while they do not rank in literary worth with his earlier works, they yet throw much light upon his life and character and it is a pleasure to me, in these dark and troublesome times,[1] and near the sundown of my life, to go over them and point out in some detail their value and significance.

Emerson was such an important figure in our literary history, and in the moral and religious development of our people, that attention cannot be directed to him too often. He could be entirely reconstructed from the unpublished matter which he left. Moreover, just to come in contact with him in times like ours is stimulating and refreshing. The younger generation will find that he

[1] Written during the World War. — C. B.

can do them good if they will pause long enough in their mad skirting over the surface of things to study him.

For my own part, a lover of Emerson from early manhood, I come back to him in my old age with a sad but genuine interest. I do not hope to find the Emerson of my youth — the man of daring and inspiring affirmation, the great solvent of a world of encrusted forms and traditions, which is so welcome to a young man — because I am no longer a young man. Emerson is the spokesman and prophet of youth and of a formative, idealistic age. His is a voice from the heights which are ever bathed in the sunshine of the spirit. I find that something one gets from Emerson in early life does not leave him when he grows old. It is a habit of mind, a test of values, a strengthening of one's faith in the essential soundness and goodness of creation. He helps to make you feel at home in nature, and in your own land and generation. He permanently exalts your idea of the mission of the poet, of the spiritual value of the external world, of the universality of the moral law, and of our kinship with the whole of nature.

There is never any despondency or infirmity of faith in Emerson. He is always hopeful and courageous, and is an antidote to the pessimism and materialism which existing times tend to foster. Open anywhere in the Journals or in the Essays

and we find the manly and heroic note. He is an unconquerable optimist, and says boldly, "Nothing but God can root out God," and he thinks that in time our culture will absorb the hells also. He counts "the dear old Devil" among the good things which the dear old world holds for him. He saw so clearly how good comes out of evil and is in the end always triumphant. Were he living in our day, he would doubtless find something helpful and encouraging to say about the terrific outburst of scientific barbarism in Europe.

It is always stimulating to hear a man ask such a question as this, even though he essay no answer to it: "Is the world (according to the old doubt) to be criticized otherwise than as the best possible in the existing system, and the population of the world the best that soils, climate, and animals permit?"

I note that in 1837 Emerson wrote this about the Germans: "I do not draw from them great influence. The heroic, the holy, I lack. They are contemptuous. They fail in sympathy with humanity. The voice of nature they bring me to hear is not divine, but ghastly, hard, and ironical. They do not illuminate me: they do not edify me." Is not this the German of to-day? If Emerson were with us now he would see, as we all see, how the age of idealism and spiritual power in Germany that gave the world the great composers

and the great poets and philosophers — Bach, Beethoven, Wagner, Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Kant, Hegel, and others — has passed and been succeeded by the hard, cruel, and sterile age of materialism, and the domination of an aggressive and conscienceless military spirit. Emerson was the poet and prophet of man's moral nature, and it is this nature — our finest and highest human sensibilities and aspirations toward justice and truth — that has been so raided and trampled upon by the chief malefactor and world outlaw in the present war.

II

Men who write Journals are usually men of certain marked traits — they are idealists, they love solitude rather than society, they are self-conscious, and they love to write. At least this seems to be true of the men of the past century who left Journals of permanent literary worth — Amiel, Emerson, and Thoreau. Amiel's Journal has more the character of a diary than has Emerson's or Thoreau's, though it is also a record of thoughts as well as of days. Emerson left more unprinted matter than he chose to publish during his lifetime.

The Journals of Emerson and Thoreau are largely made up of left-overs from their published works, and hence as literary material, when compared with their other volumes, are of secondary im-

portance. You could not make another "Walden" out of Thoreau's Journals, nor build up another chapter on "Self-Reliance," or on "Character," or on the "Over-Soul," from Emerson's, though there are fragments here and there in both that are on a level with their best work.

Emerson records in 1835 that his brother Charles wondered that he did not become sick at the stomach over his poor Journal: "Yet is obdurate habit callous even to contempt. I must scribble on . . ." Charles evidently was not a born scribbler like his brother. He was clearly more fond of real life and of the society of his fellows. He was an orator and could not do himself justice with the pen. Men who write Journals, as I have said, are usually men of solitary habits, and their Journal largely takes the place of social converse. Amiel, Emerson, and Thoreau were lonely souls, lacking in social gifts, and seeking relief in the society of their own thoughts. Such men go to their Journals as other men go to their clubs. They love to be alone with themselves, and dread to be benumbed or drained of their mental force by uncongenial persons. To such a man his Journal becomes his duplicate self and he says to it what he could not say to his nearest friend. It becomes both an altar and a confessional. Especially is this true of deeply religious souls such as the men I have named. They commune, through their

Journals, with the demons that attend them. Amiel begins his Journal with the sentence, "There is but one thing needful — to possess God," and Emerson's Journal in its most characteristic pages is always a search after God, or the highest truth.

"After a day of humiliation and stripes," he writes, "if I can write it down, I am straightway relieved and can sleep well. After a day of joy, the beating heart is calmed again by the diary. If grace is given me by all angels and I pray, if then I can catch one ejaculation of humility or hope and set it down in syllables, devotion is at an end." "I write my journal, I deliver my lecture with joy," but "at the name of society all my repulsions play, all my quills rise and sharpen."

He clearly had no genius for social intercourse. At the age of thirty he said he had "no skill to live with men; that is, such men as the world is made of; and such as I delight in I seldom find." Again he says, aged thirty-two, "I study the art of solitude; I yield me as gracefully as I can to destiny," and adds that it is "from eternity a settled thing" that he and society shall be "nothing to each other." He takes to his Journal instead. It is his house of refuge.

Yet he constantly laments how isolated he is, mainly by reason of the poverty of his nature, his want of social talent, of animal heat, and of sympathy with the commonplace and the humdrum.

"I have no animal spirits, therefore when surprised by company and kept in a chair for many hours, my heart sinks, my brow is clouded, and I think I will run for Acton woods and live with the squirrels henceforth." But he does not run away; he often takes it out in hoeing in his garden: "My good hoe as it bites the ground revenges my wrongs, and I have less lust to bite my enemies." "In smoothing the rough hillocks I smooth my temper. In a short time I can hear the bobolinks sing and see the blessed deluge of light and color that rolls around me." Somewhere he has said that the writer should not dig, and yet again and again we find him resorting to hoe or spade to help him sleep, as well as to smooth his temper: "Yesterday afternoon, I stirred the earth about my shrubs and trees and quarrelled with the piper-grass, and now I have slept, and no longer am morose nor feel twitchings in the muscles of my face when a visitor is by." We welcome these and many another bit of self-analysis: "I was born with a seeing eye and not a helping hand. I can only comfort my friends by thought, and not by love or aid." "I was made a hermit and am content with my lot. I pluck golden fruit from rare meetings with wise men." Margaret Fuller told him he seemed always on stilts: "It is even so. Most of the persons whom I see in my own house I see across a gulf. I cannot go to them nor they come to me.

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Nothing can exceed the frigidity and labor of my speech with such. You might turn a yoke of oxen between every pair of words; and the behavior is as awkward and proud."

. . . . . .

"I would have my book read as I have read my favorite books, not with explosion and astonishment, a marvel and a rocket, but a friendly and agreeable influence stealing like a scent of a flower, or the sight of a new landscape on a traveller. I neither wish to be hated and defied by such as I startle, nor to be kissed and hugged by the young whose thoughts I stimulate."

Here Emerson did center in himself and never apologized. His gospel of self-reliance came natural to him. He was emphatically self, without a trace of selfishness. He went abroad to study himself more than other people — to note the effect of Europe on himself. He says, "I believe it's sound philosophy that wherever we go, whatever we do, self is the sole object we study and learn. Montaigne said himself was all he knew. Myself is much more than I know, and yet I know nothing else." In Paris he wrote to his brother William, "A lecture at the Sorbonne is far less useful to me than a lecture that I write myself"; and as for the literary society in Paris, though he thought longingly of it, yet he said, "Probably in years it would avail me nothing."

The Journals are mainly a record of his thoughts and not of his days, except so far as the days brought him ideas. Here and there the personal element creeps in — some journey, some bit of experience, some visitor, or walks with Channing, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Jones Very, and others; some lecturing experience, his class meetings, his travels abroad and chance meetings with distinguished men. But all the more purely personal element makes up but a small portion of the ten thick volumes of his Journal. Most readers, I fancy, will wish that the proportion of these things were greater. We all have thoughts and speculations of our own, but we can never hear too much about a man's real life.

Emerson stands apart from the other poets and essayists of New England, and of English literature generally, as of another order. He is a reversion to an earlier type, the type of the bard, the skald, the poet-seer. He is the poet and prophet of the moral ideal. His main significance is religious, though nothing could be farther from him than creeds and doctrines, and the whole ecclesiastical formalism. There is an atmosphere of sanctity about him that we do not feel about any other poet and essayist of his time. His poems are the fruit of Oriental mysticism and bardic fervor grafted upon the shrewd, parsimonious, New England puritanic stock. The stress and wild, uncertain

melody of his poetry is like that of the wind-harp. No writing surpasses his in the extent to which it takes hold of the concrete, the real, the familiar, and none surpasses his in its elusive, mystical suggestiveness, and its cryptic character. It is Yankee wit and shrewdness on one side, and Oriental devoutness, pantheism, and symbolism on the other. Its cheerful and sunny light of the common day enhances instead of obscures the light that falls from the highest heaven of the spirit. Saadi or Hafiz or Omar might have fathered him, but only a New England mother could have borne him. Probably more than half his poetry escapes the average reader; his longer poems, like "Initial, Dæmonic, and Celestial Love," "Monadnoc," "Merlin," "The Sphinx," "The World-Soul," set the mind groping for the invisible rays of the spectrum of human thought and knowledge, but many of the shorter poems, such as "The Problem," "Each and All," "Sea-Shore," "The Snow-Storm," "Musketaquid," "Days," "Song of Nature," "My Garden," "Boston Hymn," "Concord Hymn," and others, are among the most precious things in our literature.

As Emerson was a bard among poets, a seer among philosophers, a prophet among essayists, an oracle among ethical teachers, so, as I have said, was he a solitary among men. He walked alone. He somewhere refers to his "porcupine impossi-

bility of contact with men." His very thoughts are not social among themselves, they separate. Each stands alone; often they hardly have a bowing acquaintance; over and over their juxtaposition is mechanical and not vital. The redeeming feature is that they can afford to stand alone, like shafts of marble or granite.

The force and worth of his page is not in its logical texture, but in the beauty and truth of its isolated sentences and paragraphs. There is little inductive or deductive reasoning in his books, but a series of affirmations whose premises and logical connection the reader does not always see.

He records that his hearers found his lectures fine and poetical but a little puzzling. "One thought them as good as a kaleidoscope." The solid men of business said that they did not understand them but their daughters did.

The lecture committee in Illinois in 1856 told him that the people wanted a hearty laugh. "The stout Illinoian," not finding the laugh, "after a short trial walks out of the hall." I think even his best Eastern audiences were always a good deal puzzled. The lecturer never tried to meet them halfway. He says himself of one of his lectures, "I found when I had finished my new lecture that it was a very good house, only the architect had unfortunately omitted the stairs." The absence of the stairs in his house — of an easy entrance

into the heart of the subject, and of a few consecutive and leading ideas — will, in a measure, account for the bewilderment of his hearers. When I heard Emerson in 1871 before audiences in Baltimore and Washington, I could see and feel this uncertainty and bewilderment in his auditors.

His lectures could not be briefly summarized. They had no central thought. You could give a sample sentence, but not the one sentence that commanded all the others. Whatever he called it, his theme, as he himself confesses, was always fundamentally the same: "In all my lectures I have taught one doctrine, namely, the infinitude of the private man. This the people accept readily enough and even with loud commendations as long as I call the lecture Art or Politics, or Literature, or the Household, but the moment I call it Religion they are shocked, though it be only the application of the same truth which they receive everywhere else to a new class of facts."

Emerson's supreme test of a man, after all other points had been considered, was the religious test: Was he truly religious? Was his pole star the moral law? Was the sense of the Infinite ever with him? But few contemporary authors met his requirements in this respect. After his first visit abroad, when he saw Carlyle, Landor, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and others, he said they were all second- or third-rate men because of their want

of the religious sense. They all looked backward to a religion of other ages, and had no faith in a present revelation.

His conception of the divine will as *the eternal tendency to the good of the whole, active in every atom, every moment*, is one of the thoughts in which religion and science meet and join hands.

III

In Emerson's Journal one sees the Emersonian worlds in their making — the essays, the addresses, the poems. Here are the nebulæ and star-dust out of which most of them came, or in which their suggestion lies. Now and then there is quite as good stuff as is found in his printed volumes, pages and paragraphs from the same high heaven of æsthetic emotion. The poetic fragments and wholes are less promising, I think, than the prose; they are evidently more experimental, and show the 'prentice hand more.

The themes around which his mind revolved all his life — nature, God, the soul — and their endless variations and implications, recur again and again in each of the ten printed volumes of the Journals. He has new thoughts on Character, Self-Reliance, Heroism, Manners, Experience, Nature, Immortality, and scores of other related subjects every day, and he presents them in new connections and with new images. His mind had

marked centrality, and fundamental problems were always near at hand with him. He could not get away from them. He renounced the pulpit and the creeds, not because religion meant less to him, but because it meant more. The religious sentiment, the feeling of the Infinite, was as the sky over his head, and the earth under his feet.

The whole stream of Emerson's mental life apparently flowed through his Journals. They were the repository of all his thoughts, all his speculations, all his mental and spiritual experiences. What a *mélange* they are! Wise sayings from his wide reading, from intercourse with men, private and public, sayings from his farmer neighbors, anecdotes, accounts of his travels, or his walks, solitary or in the company of Channing, Hawthorne, or Thoreau, his gropings after spiritual truths, and a hundred other things, are always marked by what he says that Macaulay did not possess — elevation of mind — and an abiding love for the real values in life and letters.

Here is the prose origin of "Days": "The days come and go like muffled and veiled figures sent from a distant friendly party, but they say nothing, and if we do not use the gifts they bring, they carry them as silently away." In this brief May entry we probably see the inception of the "Humble-Bee" poem: "Yesterday in the woods I followed the fine humble bee with rhymes and fancies free."

Now and then we come upon the germ of other poems in his prose. Here is a hint of "Each and All" in a page written at the age of thirty-one: "The shepherd or the beggar in his red cloak little knows what a charm he gives to the wide landscape that charms you on the mountain-top and whereof he makes the most agreeable feature, and I no more the part my individuality plays in the All." The poem, his reader will remember, begins in this wise:

> "Little thinks, in the field, yon red-cloaked clown
> Of thee from the hill-top looking down."

In a prose sentence written in 1835 he says: "Nothing is beautiful alone. Nothing but is beautiful in the whole." In the poem above referred to this becomes:

> "All are needed by each one;
> Nothing is fair or good alone."

In 1856 we find the first stanza of his beautiful "Two Rivers," written in prose form: "Thy voice is sweet, Musketaquid; repeats the music of the rain; but sweeter rivers silent flit through thee as those through Concord plain." The substance of the next four stanzas is in prose form also: "Thou art shut in thy banks; but the stream I love, flows in thy water, and flows through rocks and through the air, and through darkness, and through men, and women. I hear and see the inundation and eternal spending of the stream, in winter and

in summer, in men and animals, in passion and thought. Happy are they who can hear it"; and so on. In the poem these sentences become:

> "Thou in thy narrow banks are pent:
> The stream I love unbounded goes
> Through flood and sea and firmament;
> Through light, through life, it forward flows.
>
> "I see the inundation sweet,
> I hear the spending of the stream
> Through years, through men, through Nature fleet,
> Through love and thought, through power and dream."

It is evident that Emerson was a severe critic of his own work. He knew when he had struck fire, and he knew when he had failed. He was as exacting with himself as with others. His conception of the character and function of the poet was so high that he found the greatest poets wanting. The poet is one of his three or four ever-recurring themes. He is the divine man. He is bard and prophet, seer and savior. He is the acme of human attainment. Verse devoid of insight into the method of nature, and devoid of religious emotion, was to him but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. He called Poe "the jingle man" because he was a mere conjurer with words. The intellectual content of Poe's works *was* negligible. He was a wizard with words and measures, but a pauper in ideas. He did not add to our knowledge, he did not add to our love of anything in nature or in life, he did not contribute to our con-

tentment in the world — the bread of life was not in him. What was in him was mastery over the architectonics of verse. Emerson saw little in Shelley for the same reason, but much in Herbert and Donne. Religion, in his sense of the term, — the deep sea into which the streams of all human thought empty, — was his final test of any man. Unless there was something fundamental about him, something that savored of the primordial deep of the universal spirit, he remained unmoved. The elemental azure of the great bodies of water is suggestive of the tone and hue Emerson demanded in great poetry. He found but little of it in the men of his time: practically none in the contemporary poets of New England. It was probably something of this pristine quality that arrested Emerson's attention in Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass." He saw in it "the Appalachian enlargement of outline and treatment for service to American literature."

Emerson said of himself: "I am a natural reader, and only a writer in the absence of natural writers. In a true time I should never have written." We must set this statement down to one of those fits of dissatisfaction with himself, those negative moods that often came upon him. What he meant by a true time is very obscure. In an earlier age he would doubtless have remained a preacher, like his father and grandfather, but coming under the

influence of Goethe, Carlyle, and Wordsworth, and other liberating influences of the nineteenth century, he was bound to be a writer. When he was but twenty-one he speaks of his immoderate fondness for writing. Writing was the passion of his life, his supreme joy, and he went through the world with the writer's eye and ear and hand always on duty. And his contribution to the literature of man's higher moral and æsthetic nature is one of the most valuable of the age in which he lived.

IV

Apart from the account of his travels and other personal experiences, the Journals are mainly made up of discussions of upwards of fifty subjects of general and fundamental interest, ranging from art to war, and looked at from many and diverse points of view. Of these subjects three are dominant, recurring again and again in each volume. These are nature, literature, and religion. Emerson's main interests centered in these themes. Using these terms in their broadest sense, this is true, I think, of all his published books. Emerson was an idealist, first, last, and all the time, and he was a literary artist, or aimed to be, first, last, and all the time, and in the same measure and to the same extent was he a devout religious soul, using the term religion as he sometimes uses it, as a feeling of the Infinite.

There are one hundred and seventy-six paragraphs, long and short, given to literature and art, and one hundred and sixty given to religious subjects, and over thirty given to nature. It is interesting to note that he devotes more paragraphs to woman than to man; and more to society than to solitude, though only to express his dislike of the former and his love for the latter. There are more thoughts about science than about metaphysics, more about war than about love, more about poetry than about philosophy, more on beauty than on knowledge, more on walking than on books. There are three times as many paragraphs on nature (thirty-three) as on the Bible, all of which is significant of his attitude of mind.

Emerson was a preacher without a creed, a scholar devoted to super-literary ends, an essayist occupied with thoughts of God, the soul, nature, the moral law — always the literary artist looking for the right word, the right image, but always bending his art to the service of religious thought. He was one of the most religious souls of his country and time, or of any country and time, yet was disowned by all the sects and churches of his time. He made religion too pervasive, and too inclusive to suit them; the stream at once got out of its banks and inundated all their old landmarks. In the last analysis of his thought, his ultimate theme was God, and yet he never allowed himself to at-

tempt any definite statement about God — refusing always to discuss God in terms of human personality. When Emerson wrote "Representative Men" he felt that Jesus was the Representative Man whom he ought to sketch, "but the task required great gifts — steadiest insight and perfect temper; else the consciousness of want of sympathy in the audience would make one petulant and sore in spite of himself."

There are few great men in history or philosophy or literature or poetry or divinity whose names do not appear more or less frequently in the Journals. For instance, in the Journal of 1864 the names or works of one hundred and seventeen men appear, ranging from Zeno to Jones Very. And this is a fair average. Of course the names of his friends and contemporaries appear the most frequently. The name that recurs the most often is that of his friend and neighbor Thoreau. There are ninety-seven paragraphs in which the Hermit of Walden is the main or the secondary figure. He discusses him and criticizes him, and quotes from him, always showing an abiding interest in, and affection for, him. Thoreau was in so many ways so characteristically Emersonian that one wonders what influence it was in the place or time that gave them both, with their disparity of ages, so nearly the same stamp. Emerson is by far the more imposing figure, the broader, the wiser, the more

tolerant, the more representative; he stood four-square to the world in a sense that Thoreau did not. Thoreau presented a pretty thin edge to the world. If he stood broadside to anything, it was to nature. He was undoubtedly deeply and permanently influenced by Emerson both in his mental habits and in his manner of life, yet the main part of him was original and unadulterated Thoreau. His literary style is in many respects better than that of Emerson; its logical texture is better; it has more continuity, more evolution, it is more flexible and adaptive; it is the medium of a lesser mind, but of a mind more thoroughly imbued with the influence of the classical standards of modern literature. I believe "Walden" will last as long as anything Emerson has written, if not longer. It is the fruit of a sweeter solitude and detachment from the world than Emerson ever knew, a private view of nature, and has a fireside and campside quality that essays fashioned for the lecture platform do not have. Emerson's pages are more like mosaics, richly inlaid with gems of thought and poetry and philosophy, while Thoreau's are more like a closely woven, many-colored textile.

Thoreau's "Maine Woods" I look upon as one of the best books of the kind in English literature. It has just the right tone and quality, like Dana's "Two Years Before the Mast" — a tone and quality that sometimes come to a man when he makes

less effort to write than to see and feel truly. He does not aim to exploit the woods, but to live with them and possess himself of their spirit. The Cape Cod book also has a similar merit; it almost leaves a taste of the salt sea spray upon your lips. Emerson criticizes Thoreau freely, and justly, I think. As a person he lacked sweetness and winsomeness; as a writer he was at times given to a meaningless exaggeration.

Henry Thoreau sends me a paper with the old fault of unlimited contradiction. The trick of his rhetoric is soon learned: it consists in substituting for the obvious word and thought its diametrical antagonist. He praises wild mountains and winter forests for their domestic air; snow and ice for their warmth; villagers and wood-choppers for their urbanity, and the wilderness for resembling Rome and Paris. With the constant inclination to dispraise cities and civilization, he yet can find no way to know woods and woodmen except by paralleling them with towns and townsmen. Channing declared the piece is excellent: but it makes me nervous and wretched to read it, with all its merits.

I told Henry Thoreau that his freedom is in the form, but he does not disclose new matter. I am very familiar with all his thoughts, — they are my own quite originally drest. But if the question be, what new ideas has he thrown into circulation, he has not yet told what that is which he was created to say. I said to him what I often feel, I only know three persons who seem to me fully to see this law of reciprocity or compensation — himself, Alcott, and myself: and 't is odd that we should all be neighbors, for in the wide land or the wide earth I do not know another who

seems to have it as deeply and originally as these three Gothamites.

A remark of Emerson's upon Thoreau calls up the image of John Muir to me: "If I knew only Thoreau, I should think coöperation of good men impossible. Must we always talk for victory, and never once for truth, for comfort, and joy?" Then, after crediting Thoreau with some admirable gifts, — centrality, penetration, strong understanding, — he proceeds to say, "all his resources of wit and invention are lost to me, in every experiment, year after year, that I make to hold intercourse with his mind. Always some weary captious paradox to fight you with, and the time and temper wasted."

Emerson met John Muir in the Yosemite in 1871 and was evidently impressed with him. Somewhere he gives a list of his men which begins with Carlyle and ends with Muir. Here was another man with more character than intellect, as Emerson said of Carlyle, and with the flavor of the wild about him. Muir was not too compliant and deferential. He belonged to the sayers of No. Contradiction was the breath of his nostrils. He had the Scottish chariness of bestowing praise or approval, and could surely give Emerson the sense of being *met* which he demanded. Writing was irksome to Muir as it was to Carlyle, but in monologue, in an attentive company, he shone;

not a great thinker, but a mind strongly characteristic. His philosophy rarely rose above that of the Sunday school, but his moral fiber was very strong, and his wit ready and keen. In conversation and in daily intercourse he was a man not easily put aside. Emerson found him deeply read in nature lore and with some suggestion about his look and manner of the wild and rugged solitude in which he lived so much.

Emerson was alive to everything around him; every object touched some spring in his mind; the church spire, the shadows on the windows at night, the little girl with her pail of whortleberries, the passing bee, bird, butterfly, the clouds, the streams, the trees — all found his mind open to any suggestion they might make. He is intent on the now and the here. He listens to every newcomer with an expectant air. He is full of the present. I once saw him at West Point during the June examinations. How alert and eager he was! The bored and perfunctory air of his fellow members on the Board of Visitors contrasted sharply with his active, expectant interest.

V

He lived absolutely in his own day and generation, and no contemporary writer of real worth escaped his notice. He is never lavish in his praise, but is for the most part just and discrimi-

nating. Walt Whitman is mentioned only thrice in the Journals, Lowell only twice, Longfellow once or twice, Matthew Arnold three times, but Jones Very is quoted and discussed sixteen times. Very was a poet who had no fast colors; he has quite faded out in our day.

Of Matthew Arnold Emerson says: "I should like to call attention to the critical superiority of Arnold, his excellent ear for style, and the singular poverty of his poetry, that in fact he has written but one poem, 'Thyrsis,' and that on an inspiration borrowed from Milton." Few good readers, I think, will agree with Emerson about the poverty of Arnold's poetry. His "Dover Beach" is one of the first-rate poems in English literature. Emerson has words of praise for Lowell — thinks the production of such a man "a certificate of good elements in the soil, climate, and institutions of America," but in 1868 he declares that his new poems show an advance "in talent rather than in poetic tone"; that the advance "rather expresses his wish, his ambition, than the uncontrollable interior impulse which is the authentic mark of a new poem, and which is unanalysable, and makes the merit of an ode of Collins, or Gray, or Wordsworth, or Herbert, or Byron." He evidently thought little of Lowell's severe arraignment of him in a college poem which he wrote soon after the delivery of the famous "Divinity School

Address." The current of religious feeling in Cambridge set so strongly against Emerson for several years that Lowell doubtless merely reflected it. Why did he not try to deflect it, or to check it? And yet, when Emerson's friends did try to defend him, it was against his will. He hated to be defended in a newspaper: "As long as all that is said is against me I feel a certain austere assurance of success, but as soon as honeyed words of praise are spoken for me I feel as one that lies unprotected before his enemies."

Next to Thoreau, Emerson devotes to Alcott more space in his Journals than to any other man. It is all telling interpretation, description, and criticism. Truly, Alcott must have had some extraordinary power to have made such a lasting impression upon Emerson. When my friend Myron Benton and I first met Emerson in 1863 at West Point, Emerson spoke of Alcott very pointedly, and said we should never miss a chance to hear his conversation, but that when he put pen to paper all his inspiration left him. His thoughts faded as soon as he tried to set them down. There must have been some curious illusion about it all on the part of Emerson, as no fragment of Alcott's wonderful talk worth preserving has come down to us. The waters of the sea are blue, but not in the pailful. There must have been something analogous in Alcott's conversations, some total effect

which the details do not justify, or something in the atmosphere which he created, that gave certain of his hearers the conviction that they were voyaging with him through the celestial depths.

It was a curious fact that Alcott "could not recall one word or part of his own conversation, or of any one's, let the expression be never so happy." And he seems to have hypnotized Emerson in the same way. "He made here some majestic utterances, but so inspired me that even I forgot the words often." "Olympian dreams," Emerson calls his talk — moonshine, it appears at this distance.

"His discourse soars to a wonderful height," says Emerson, "so regular, so lucid, so playful, so new and disdainful of all boundaries of tradition and experience, that the hearers seem no longer to have bodies or material gravity, but almost they can mount into the air at pleasure, or leap at one bound out of this poor solar system. I say this of his speech exclusively, for when he attempts to write, he loses, in my judgment, all his power, and I derive more pain than pleasure from the perusal." Some illusion surely that made the effort to report him like an attempt to capture the rainbow, only to find it common water.

In 1842 Emerson devotes eight pages in his Journal to an analysis of Alcott, and very masterly they are. He ends with these sentences: "This

noble genius discredits genius to me. I do not want any more such persons to exist."

"When Alcott wrote from England that he was bringing home Wright and Lane, I wrote him a letter which I required him to show them, saying that they might safely trust his theories, but that they should put no trust whatever in his statement of facts. When they all arrived here — he and his victims — I asked them if he showed them the letter; they answered that he did; so I was clear."

Another neighbor who greatly impressed Emerson, and of whom he has much to say, was Father Taylor, the sailor preacher of Boston. There is nothing better in the Journals than the pages devoted to description and analysis of this remarkable man. To Emerson he suggested the wealth of Nature. He calls him a "godly poet, the Shakespear of the sailor and the poor." "I delight in his great personality, the way and sweep of the man which, like a frigate's way, takes up for the time the centre of the ocean, paves it with a white street, and all the lesser craft 'do curtsey to him, do him reverence.'" A man all emotion, all love, all inspiration, but, like Alcott, impossible to justify your high estimate of by any quotation. His power was all personal living power, and could not be transferred to print. The livid embers of his discourse became dead charcoal when reported by another, or, as Emerson more happily puts it,

"A creature of instinct, his colors are all opaline and dove's-neck-lustre and can only be seen at a distance. Examine them, and they disappear." More exactly they are visible only at a certain angle. Of course this is in a measure true of all great oratory — it is not so much the words as the man.

Speaking of Father Taylor in connection with Alcott, Emerson says that one was the fool of his ideas, and the other of his fancy.

An intellectual child of Emerson's was Ellery Channing, but he seems to have inherited in an exaggerated form only the faults of his father. Channing appears to have been a crotchety, disgruntled person, always aiming at walking on his head instead of on his heels. Emerson quotes many of his sayings, not one of them worth preserving, all marked by a kind of violence and disjointedness. They had many walks together.

Emerson was so fond of paradoxes and extreme statements that both Channing and Thoreau seem to have vied with each other in uttering hard or capricious sayings when in his presence. Emerson catches at a vivid and picturesque statement, if it has even a fraction of truth in it, like a fly-catcher at a fly.

A fair sample of Channing's philosophy is the following: "He persists in his bad opinion of orchards and farming, declares that the only success he ever

had with a farmer was that he once paid a cent for a russet apple; and farming, he thinks, is an attempt to outwit God with a hoe; that they plant a great many potatoes with much ado, but it is doubtful if they ever get the seed back." Channing seems to have dropped such pearls of wisdom as that all along the road in their walks! Another sample of Channing's philosophy which Emerson thinks worthy of quoting. They were walking over the fields in November. Channing complained of the poverty of invention on the part of Nature: "'Why, they had frozen water last year; why should they do it again? Therefore it was so easy to be an artist, because *they* do the same thing always,' and therefore he only wants time to make him perfect in the imitation."

VI

Emerson was occupied entirely with the future, as Carlyle was occupied entirely with the past. Emerson shared the open expectation of the new world, Carlyle struggled under the gloom and pessimism of the old — a greater character, but a far less lambent and helpful spirit. Emerson seems to have been obsessed with the idea that a new and greater man was to appear. He looked into the face of every newcomer with an earnest, expectant air, as if he might prove to be the new man: this thought inspires the last stanzas of his "Song of Nature":

"Let war and trade and creeds and song
Blend, ripen race on race,
The sunburnt world a man shall breed
Of all the zones and countless days.

"No ray is dimmed, no atom worn,
My oldest force is good as new,
And the fresh rose on yonder thorn
Gives back the bending heavens in dew."

Emerson was under no illusion as to the effect of distance. He knew the past was once the present, and that if it seemed to be transformed and to rise into cloud-land behind us, it was only the enchantment of distance — an enchantment which men have been under in all ages. The everyday, the near-at-hand, become prosaic; there is no room for the alchemy of time and space to work in. It has been said that all martyrdoms looked mean in the suffering. Holy ground is not holy when we walk upon it. The now and the here seem cheap and commonplace. Emerson knew that "a score of airy miles will smooth rough Monadnoc to a gem," but he knew also that it would not change the character of Monadnoc. He knew that the past and the present, the near and the far, were made of one stuff. He united the courage of science with the sensibility of poetry. He would not be defrauded of the value of the present hour, or of the thoughts which he and other men think, or of the lives which they live to-day. "I will tell you how you can enrich me — if you will recommend to-day to me." His doctrine of self-reliance,

which he preached in season and out of season, was based upon the conviction that Nature and the soul do not become old and outworn, that the great characters and great thoughts of the past were the achievements of men who trusted themselves before custom or law. The sun shines to-day; the constellations hang there in the heavens the same as of old. God is as near us as ever He was — why should we take our revelations at second hand? No other writer who has used the English language has ever preached such a heroic doctrine of self-trust, or set the present moment so high in the circle of the years, in the diadem of the days.

It is an old charge against Emerson that he was deficient in human sympathy. He makes it against himself; the ties of association which most persons find so binding seemed to hold him very lightly. There was always a previous question with him — the moral value of one's associations. Unless you sicken and die to some purpose, why such an ado about it? Unless the old ruin of a house harbored great men and great women, or was the scene of heroic deeds, why linger around it? The purely human did not appeal to him; history interested him only as it threw light upon to-day. History is a record of the universal mind; hence of your mind, of my mind — "all the facts of history preëxist in the mind as laws." "What Plato thought, every man may think. What a

saint has felt, he may feel; what at any time has befallen any man, he can understand." "All that Shakespear says of the king, yonder slip of a boy that reads in the corner feels to be true of himself"; and so on, seeing in history only biography, and interested in the past only as he can link it with the present. Always an intellectual interest, never a human or an emotional one. His Journal does not reveal him going back to the old places, or lingering fondly over the memories of his youth. He speaks of his "unpleasing boyhood," of his unhappy recollections, etc., not because of unkindness or hardships experienced, but because of certain shortcomings or deficiencies of character and purpose, of which he is conscious — "some meanness," or "unfounded pride" which may lower him in the opinion of others. Pride, surely, but not ignoble pride.

Emerson's expectation of the great poet, the great man, is voiced in his "Representative Men": "If the companions of our childhood should turn out to be heroes, and their condition regal, it would not surprise us." On the contrary, I think it would surprise most of us very much. It is from the remote, the unfamiliar, that we expect great things. We have no illusions about the near-at-hand. But with Emerson the contrary seems to have been the case. He met the new person or took up the new volume with a thrill of expectancy, a condition

of mind which often led him to exaggerate the fact, and to give an undue bias in favor of the novel, the audacious, the revolutionary. His optimism carried him to great lengths. Many of the new stars in his literary firmament have quite faded out — all of them, I think, but Walt Whitman. It was mainly because he was so full of faith in the coming man that he gave, offhand, such a tremendous welcome to "Leaves of Grass" — a welcome that cooled somewhat later, when he found he had got so much more of the unconventional and the self-reliant than he had bargained for. I remember that when I spoke of Walt Whitman to him in Washington in 1871 or '72, he said he wished Whitman's friends would "quarrel" with him more about his poems, as some years earlier he himself had done, on the occasion when he and Whitman walked for hours on Boston Common, he remonstrating with Whitman about certain passages in "Leaves of Grass" which he tried in vain to persuade him to omit in the next edition. Whitman would persist in being Whitman. Now, counseling such a course to a man in an essay on "Self-Reliance" is quite a different thing from entirely approving of it in a concrete example.

In 1840 Emerson writes: "A notice of modern literature ought to include (ought it not?) a notice of Carlyle, of Tennyson, of Landor, of Bettina, of Sampson Reed." The first three names surely, but

who is Bettina, the girl correspondent of Goethe, that she should go in such a list? Reed, we learn, was a Boston bank clerk, and a Swedenborgian, who wrote a book on the growth of the mind, from which Emerson quotes, and to which he often alludes, a book that has long been forgotten; and is not Bettina forgotten also?

Emerson found more in Jones Very than has any one else; the poems of Very that he included in "Parnassus" have little worth. A comparatively unknown and now forgotten English writer also moved Emerson unduly. Listen to this: "In England, Landor, De Quincey, Carlyle, three men of original literary genius; but the scholar, the catholic, cosmic intellect, Bacon's own son, the Lord Chief Justice on the Muse's Bench is" — who do you think, in 1847? — "Wilkinson"! Garth Wilkinson, who wrote a book on the human body. Emerson says of him in "English Traits": "There is in the action of his mind a long Atlantic roll, not known except in deepest waters, and only lacking what ought to accompany such powers, a manifest centrality." To bid a man's stock up like that may not, in the long run, be good for the man, but it shows what a generous, optimistic critic Emerson was.

VII

In his published works Emerson is chary of the personal element; he says: "We can hardly speak

of our own experiences and the names of our friends sparingly enough." In his books he would be only an impersonal voice; the man Emerson, as such, he hesitated to intrude. But in the Journals we get much more of the personal element, as would be expected. We get welcome glimpses of the man, of his moods, of his diversions, of his home occupations, of his self-criticism. We see him as a host, as a lecturer, as a gardener, as a member of a rural community. We see him in his walks and talks with friends and neighbors — with Alcott, Thoreau, Channing, Jones Very, Hawthorne, and others — and get snatches of the conversations. We see the growth of his mind, his gradual emancipation from the bondage of the orthodox traditions.

Very welcome is the growth of Emerson's appreciation of Wordsworth. As a divinity student he was severe in his criticism of Wordsworth, but as his own genius unfolded more and more he saw the greatness of Wordsworth, till in middle life he pronounced his famous Ode the high-water mark of English literature. Yet after that his fondness for a telling, picturesque figure allows him to inquire if Wordsworth is not like a bell with a wooden tongue. All this is an admirable illustration of his familiar dictum: "Speak what you think now in hard words, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict everything you say to-day."

In the Journals we see Emerson going up and down the country in his walks, on his lecture tours in the West, among his neighbors, wherever and whenever he goes as alert and watchful as a sportsman. He was a sportsman of a new kind; his game was ideas. He was always looking for hints and images to aid him in his writings. He was like a bird perpetually building a nest; every moment he wanted new material, and everything that diverted him from his quest was an unwelcome interruption. He had no great argument to build, no system of philosophy to organize and formulate, no plot, like a novelist, to work out, no controversy on hand — he wanted pertinent, concrete, and striking facts and incidents to weave in his essay on Fate, or Circles, or Character, or Farming, or Worship, or Wealth — something that his intuitive and disjointed habit of thought could seize upon and make instant use of.

We see him walking in free converse with his friends and neighbors, receiving them in his own house, friendly and expectant, but always standing aloof, never giving himself heartily to them, exchanging ideas with them across a gulf, prizing their wit and their wisdom, but cold and reserved toward them personally, destitute of all feeling of comradeship, an eye, an ear, a voice, an intellect, but rarely, or in a minor degree, a heart, or a feeling of fellowship — a giving and a taking quite above

and beyond the reach of articulate speech. When they had had their say, he was done with them. When you have found a man's limitations, he says, it is all up with him. After your friend has fired his shot, good-by. The pearl in the oyster is what is wanted, and not the oyster. "If I love you, what is that to you?" is a saying that could have been coined only in Concord. It seems to me that the basis of all wholesome human attachment is character, not intellect. Admiration and love are quite different things. Transcendental friendships seem to be cold, bloodless affairs.

One feels as if he wanted to squeeze or shake Emerson to see if he cannot get some normal human love out of him, a love that looks for nothing beyond love, a love which is its own excuse for being, a love that is not a bargain — simple, common, disinterested human love. But Emerson said, "I like man but not men."

"You would have me love you," he writes in his Journal. "What shall I love? Your body? The supposition disgusts you. What you have thought and said? Well, whilst you were thinking and saying them, but not now. I see no possibility of loving anything but what now is, and is becoming; your courage, your enterprise, your budding affection, your opening thought, your prayer, I can love — but what else?"

Can you not love your friend for himself alone,

for his kinship with you, without taking an inventory of his moral and intellectual qualities; for something in him that makes you happy in his presence? The personal attraction which Whitman felt between himself and certain types of men, and which is the basis of most manly friendships, Emerson probably never felt. One cannot conceive of him as caring deeply for any person who could not teach him something. He says, "I speculate on virtue, not burn with love." Again, "A rush of thoughts is the only conceivable prosperity that can come to me." Pure intellectual values seem alone to have counted with Emerson and his followers. With men his question was, "What can you teach me?" With Nature, "What new image or suggestion have you got for me today?" With science, "What ethical value do your facts hold?" With natural history, "Can I translate your facts and laws into my supernatural history?" With civil history, "Will your record help me to understand my own day and land?" The quintessence of things was what he always sought.

"We cannot forgive another for not being ourselves," Emerson wrote in 1842, and then added, "We lose time in trying to be like others." One is reminded of passages in the Emerson-Carlyle correspondence, wherein each tried to persuade the other to be like himself. Carlyle would have Emerson "become concrete and write in prose the

straightest way," would have him come down from his "perilous altitude," "soliloquizing on the eternal mountain-tops only, in vast solitude, where men and their affairs lie all hushed in a very dim remoteness and only *the man* and the stars and the earth are visible — come down into your own poor Nineteenth Century, its follies, its maladies, its blind, or half-blind but gigantic toilings, its laughter and its tears, and try to evolve in some measure the hidden God-like that lies in it." "I wish you would take an American hero, one whom you really love, and give us a History of him — make an artistic bronze statue (in good words) of his Life and him!" Emerson's reply in effect is, Cremate your heroes and give me their ashes — give me "the culled results, the quintessence of private conviction, a *liber veritatis*, a few sentences, hints of the final moral you draw from so much penetrating inquest into past and present men."

In reply to Carlyle's criticism of the remote and abstract character of his work, Emerson says, "What you say now and heretofore respecting the remoteness of my writing and thinking from real life, though I hear substantially the same criticism made by my countrymen, I do not know what it means. If I can at any time express the law and the ideal right, that should satisfy me without measuring the divergence from it of the last act of Congress."

VIII

EMERSON'S love of nature was one of his ruling passions. It took him to the country to live, it led him to purchase Walden Pond and the Walden woods; it led him forth upon his almost daily walks, winter and summer, to the fields and the woods. His was the love of the poet and the idealist, of the man who communes with Nature, and finds a moral and an intellectual tonic in her works. The major part of his poetry is inspired by Nature. He complains of Tennyson's poetry that it has few or no wood notes. His first book, "Nature," is steeped in religious and poetic emotion. He said in his Journal in 1841: "All my thoughts are foresters. I have scarce a day-dream on which the breath of the pines has not blown, and their shadows waved. Shall I not then call my little book Forest Essays?" He finally called it "Nature." He loves the "hermit birds that harbor in the woods. I can do well for weeks with no other society than the partridge and the jay, my daily company."

"I have known myself entertained by a single dew-drop, or an icicle, by a liatris, or a fungus, and seen God revealed in the shadow of a leaf." He says that going to Nature is more than a medicine, it is health. "As I walked in the woods I felt what I often feel, that nothing can befall me in life, no calamity, no disgrace (leaving me my

eyes) to which Nature will not offer a sweet consolation. Standing on the bare ground with my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into the infinite space, I became happy in my universal relations." This sentiment of his also recalls his lines:

> "A woodland walk,
> A quest of river-grapes, a mocking thrush,
> A wild-rose, or rock-loving columbine,
> Salve my worst wounds."

If life were long enough, among my thousand and one works should be a book of Nature whereof Howitt's *Seasons* should not be so much the model as the parody. It should contain the natural history of the woods around my shifting camp for every month in the year. It should tie their astronomy, botany, physiology, meteorology, picturesque, and poetry together. No bird, no bug, no bud, should be forgotten on his day and hour. To-day the chickadees, the robins, bluebirds and song-sparrows sang to me. I dissected the buds of the birch and the oak; in every one of the last is a star. The crow sat above as idle as I below. The river flowed brimful, and I philosophised upon this composite, collective beauty which refuses to be analysed. Nothing is beautiful alone. Nothing but is beautiful in the whole. Learn the history of a craneberry. Mark the day when the pine cones and acorns fall.

I go out daily and nightly to feed my eyes on the horizon and the sky, and come to feel the want of this scope as I do of water for my washing.

What learned I this morning in the woods, the oracular woods? Wise are they, the ancient nymphs; pleasing, sober, melancholy truth say those untameable savages, the pines.

He frequently went to Walden Pond of an afternoon and read Goethe or some other great author.

There was an element of mysticism in Emerson's love of nature as there is in that of all true nature-lovers. None knew better than he that nature is not all birds and flowers. His love of nature was that of the poet and artist, and not that of the scientist or naturalist.

"I tell you I love the peeping of the Hyla in a pond in April, or the evening cry of the whippoorwill, better than all the bellowing of all the Bulls of Bashan, or all the turtles of all Palestine."

Any personal details about his life which Emerson gives us are always welcome. We learn that his different winter courses of lectures in Boston, usually ten of them, were attended on an average by about five hundred persons, and netted him about five hundred dollars.

When he published a new volume, he was very liberal with presentation copies. Of his first volume of poems, published in 1846, he sent eighty copies to his friends. When "May-Day" was published in 1867, he sent fifty copies to friends; one of them went to Walt Whitman. I saw it the day it came. It was in a white dress (silk, I think); very beautiful. He sent a copy of his first volume of "Nature" to Landor. One would like to know what Landor said in reply. The copy he sent to Carlyle I saw in the Scot's library, in Cheyne Row, in 1871.

IX

Emerson was so drawn to the racy and original that it seems as if original sin had a certain fascination for him. The austere, the Puritanical Emerson, the heir of eight generations of clergymen, the man who did not like to have Frederika Bremer play the piano in his house on Sunday, seems at times to covet the "swear-words" of the common people. They itch at his ears, they have flavor and reality. He sometimes records them in his Journal; for example, this remark of the Canadian wood-chopper who cut wood for his neighbor — he preferred to work by the job rather than by the day — the days were "so damned long!"

The mob, Emerson says, is always interesting: "A blacksmith, a truckman, a farmer, we follow into the bar-room and watch with eagerness what they shall say." "Cannot the stinging dialect of the sailor be domesticated?" "My page about Consistency would be better written, 'Damn Consistency.'" But try to fancy Emerson swearing like the men on the street! Once only he swore a sacred oath, and that he himself records: it was called out by the famous, and infamous, Fugitive Slave Law which made every Northern man hound and huntsman for the Southern slave-driver. "This filthy enactment," he says, "was made in the Nineteenth Century by men who could read and write. I will not obey it, by God!"

Evidently the best thing the laboring people had to offer Emerson was their racy and characteristic speech. When one of his former neighbors said of an eclipse of the sun that it looked as if a "nigger" was poking his head into the sun, Emerson recorded it in his Journal. His son reports that Emerson enjoyed the talk of the stable-men and used to tell their anecdotes and boasts of their horses when he came home; for example, "In the stable you'd take him for a slouch, but lead him to the door, and when he lifts up his eyes, and looks abroad, — by thunder! you'd think the sky was all horse." Such surprises and exaggerations always attracted him, unless they took a turn that made him laugh. He loved wit with the laugh taken out of it. The genial smile and not uproarious laughter suited his mood best.

He was a lover of quiet, twinkling humor. Such humor gleams out often in his Journal. It gleams in this passage about Dr. Ripley: "Dr. Ripley prays for rain with great explicitness on Sunday, and on Monday the showers fell. When I spoke of the speed with which his prayers were answered, the good man looked modest." There is another prayer-for-rain story that he enjoys telling: "Dr. Allyne, of Duxbury, prayed for rain, at church. In the afternoon the boys carried umbrellas. 'Why?' 'Because you prayed for rain.' 'Pooh! boys! we always pray for rain: it's customary.'"

At West Point he asked a lieutenant if they had morning prayers at college. "We have *reveillé* beat, which is the same thing."

He tells with relish the story of a German who went to hire a horse and chaise at a stable in Cambridge. "Shall I put in a buffalo?" inquired the livery-man. "My God! no," cried the astonished German, "put in a horse."

Emerson, I am sure, takes pleasure in relating a characteristic story of Dr. Ripley and a thunder-shower: "One August afternoon, when I was in the hayfield helping him with his man to rake up his hay, I well remember his pleading, almost reproachful looks at the sky when the thunder gust was coming up to spoil the hay. He raked very fast, then looked at the clouds and said, 'We are in the Lord's hands, mind your rake, George! we are in the Lord's hands,' and seemed to say, 'You know me, the field is mine — Dr. Ripley's — thine own servant.'"

The stories Emerson delighted in were all rich in this quiet humor. I heard of one he used to tell about a man who, when he went to his club at night, often lingered too long over his cups, and came home befuddled in the small hours, and was frequently hauled over the coals by his wife. One night he again came home late, and was greeted with the usual upbraiding in the morning. "It was not late," he said, "it was only one o'clock."

"It was much later than that," said the wife. "It was one o'clock," repeated the man; "I heard it strike one three or four times!"

Another good Emersonian story, though I do not know that he ever heard it, is that of an old woman who had a farm in Indiana near the Michigan line. The line was resurveyed, and the authorities set her farm in Michigan. The old lady protested — she said it was all she could do to stand the winters of Indiana, she could never stand those of Michigan!

Cannot one see a twinkle in Emerson's eye when he quotes his wife as saying that "it is wicked to go to church on Sunday"? Emerson's son records that his father hated to be made to laugh, as he could not command his face well. Hence he evidently notes with approval another remark of his wife's: "A human being should beware how he laughs, for then he shows all his faults." What he thought of the loud, surprising laugh with which Carlyle often ended his bitter sentences, I do not know that he records. Its meaning to Carlyle was evidently, "Oh! what does it all matter?" If Emerson himself did not smile when he wrote the sentence about "a maiden so pure that she exchanged glances only with the stars," his reader, I am sure, will.

Emerson evidently enjoyed such a story as this which was told him by a bishop: There was a dis-

pute in a vestry at Providence between two hot church-members. One said at last, "I should like to know who you are" —

"Who I am?" cried the other, — "who I am! I am a humble Christian, you damned old heathen, you!"

The minister whom he heard say that "nobody enjoyed religion less than ministers, as none enjoyed food so little as cooks," must have provoked the broadest kind of a smile.

Although one of Emerson's central themes in his Journals was his thought about God, or his feeling for the Infinite, he never succeeded in formulating his ideas on the subject and could not say what God is or is not. At the age of twenty-one he wrote in his Journal, "I know that I *know* next to nothing." A very unusual, but a very promising frame of mind for a young man. "It is not certain that God exists, but that He does not is a most bewildering and improbable Chimera."

A little later he wrote: "The government of God is not a plan — that would be Destiny, [or we may say Calvinism,] it is extempore."

He quotes this from Plotinus: "Of the Unity of God, nothing can be predicated, neither being, nor essence, nor life, for it is above all these."

It was a bold saying of his that "God builds his temple in the heart on the ruins of churches and religion."

"A great deal of God in the universe," he says, "but not available to us until we can make it up into a man."

But if asked, What makes it up into a man? why does it take this form? he would have been hard put to it for an answer.

Persons who assume to know all about God, as if He lived just around the corner, as Matthew Arnold said, will not find much comfort in Emerson's uncertainty and blind groping for adequate expression concerning Him. How can we put the All, the Eternal, in words? How can we define the Infinite without self-contradiction? Our minds are cast in the mould of the finite; our language is fashioned from our dealings with a world of boundaries and limitations and concrete objects and forces. How much can it serve us in dealing with a world of opposite kind — with the Whole, the Immeasurable, the Omnipresent, and Omnipotent? Of what use are our sounding-lines in a bottomless sea? How are we to apply our conceptions of personality to the all-life, to that which transcends all limitations, to that which is everywhere and yet nowhere? Shall we assign a local habitation and a name to the universal energy? As the sunlight puts out our lamp or candle, so our mental lights grow pale in the presence of the Infinite Light. We can deal with the solid bodies on the surface of the earth, but the earth as

a sphere in the heavens baffles us. All our terms of over and under, up and down, east and west, and the like, fail us. You may go westward around the world and return to your own door coming from the east. The circle is a perpetual contradiction, the sphere a surface without boundaries, a mass without weight. When we ascribe weight to the earth, we are trying it by the standards of bodies on its surface — the pull of the earth is the measure of their weight; but the earth itself — what pulls that? Only some larger body can pull that, and the adjustment of the system is such that the centripetal and centrifugal forces balance each other, and the globes float as lightly as any feather.

Emerson said he denied personality to God because it is too little, not too much. If you ascribe personality to God, it is perfectly fair to pester you with questions about Him. Where is He? How long has He been there? What does He do? Personality without place, or form, or substance, or limitation is a contradiction of terms. We are the victims of words. We get a name for a thing and then invent the thing that fits it. All our names for the human faculties, as the will, the reason, the understanding, the imagination, conscience, instincts, and so on, are arbitrary divisions of a whole, to suit our own convenience, like the days of the week, or the seasons of the year. Out

of unity we make diversity for purposes of our practical needs. Thought tends to the one, action to the many. We must have small change for everything in the universe, because our lives are made up of small things. We must break wholes up into fractions, and then seek their common multiple. Only thus can we deal with them. We deal with God by limiting Him and breaking Him up into his attributes, or by conceiving Him under the figure of the Trinity. He is thus less baffling to us. We can handle Him the better. We make a huge man of Him and then try to dodge the consequences of our own limitations.

All these baffling questions pressed hard upon Emerson. He could not do without God in nature, and yet, like most of us, he could not justify himself until he had trimmed and cut away a part of nature. God is the All, but the All is a hard mass to digest. It means hell as well as heaven, demon as well as seraph, geology as well as biology, devolution as well as evolution, earthquake as well as earth tranquillity, cyclones as well as summer breezes, the jungle as well as the household, pain as well as pleasure, death as well as life. How are you to reconcile all these contradictions?

Emerson said that nature was a swamp with flowers and birds on the borders, and terrible things in the interior. Shall we have one God for the fair things, and another God for the terrible things?

"Nature is saturated with deity," he says, the terrific things as the beatific, I suppose. "A great deal of God in the universe," he again says, "but not valuable to us till we can make it up into a man." And when we make it up into a man we have got a true compendium of nature; all the terrific and unholy elements — fangs and poisons and eruptions, sharks and serpents — have each and all contributed something to the make-up. Man is nature incarnated, no better, no worse.

But the majority of mankind who take any interest in the God-question at all will probably always think of the Eternal in terms of man, and endow Him with personality.

One feels like combating some of Emerson's conclusions, or, at least, like discounting them. His refusal to see any value in natural science as such, I think, shows his limitations. "Natural history," he says, "by itself has no value; it is like a single sex; but marry it to human history and it is poetry. Whole Floras, all Linnæus', and Buffon's volumes contain not one line of poetry." Of course he speaks for himself. Natural facts, scientific truth, as such, had no interest to him. One almost feels as if this were idealism gone to seed.

"Shall I say that the use of Natural Science seems merely 'ancillary' to Morals? I would learn the law of the defraction of a ray because

when I understand it, it will illustrate, perhaps suggest, a new truth in ethics." Is the ethical and poetic value of the natural sciences, then, their main or only value to the lay mind? Their technical details, their tables and formulæ and measurements, we may pass by, but the natural truths they disclose are of interest to the healthy mind for their own sake. It is not the ethics of chemical reactions and combinations — if there be ethics in them — that arrests our attention, but the light they throw on the problem of how the world was made, and how our own lives go on. The method of Nature in the physical world no doubt affords clues to the method of Nature in the non-physical, or supersensuous world. But apart from that, it is incredible that a mind like Emerson's took no interest in natural knowledge for its own sake. The fact that two visible and inodorous gases like hydrogen and oxygen — one combustible and the other the supporter of combustion — when chemically combined produce water, which extinguishes fire, is intensely interesting as affording us a glimpse of the contradictions and paradoxes that abound everywhere in Nature's methods. If there is any ethics or any poetry in it, let him have it who can extract it. The great facts of nature, such as the sphericity of the cosmic bodies, their circular motions, their mutual interdependence, the unprovable ether in which

they float, the blue dome of the sky, the master currents of the ocean, the primary and the secondary rocks, have an intellectual value, but how they in any way illustrate the moral law is hard to see. The ethics, or right and wrong, of attraction and repulsion, of positive and negative, have no validity outside the human sphere. Might is right in Nature, or, rather, we are outside the standards of right and wrong in her sphere. Scientific knowledge certainly has a poetic side to it, but we do not go to chemistry or to geology or to botany for rules for the conduct of life. We go to these things mainly for the satisfaction which the knowledge of Nature's ways gives us.

So with natural history. For my own part I find the life-histories of the wild creatures about me, their ways of getting on in the world, their joys, their fears, their successes, their failures, their instincts, their intelligence, intensely interesting without any ulterior considerations. I am not looking for ethical or poetic values. I am looking for natural truths. I am less interested in the sermons in stones than I am in the life under the stones. The significance of the metamorphosis of the grub into the butterfly does not escape me, but I am more occupied with the way the caterpillar weaves her cocoon and hangs herself up for the winter than I am in this lesson. I had rather see a worm cast its skin than see a king crowned.

I had rather see Phœbe building her mud nest than the preacher writing his sermon. I had rather see the big moth emerge from her cocoon — fresh and untouched as a coin that moment from the die — than the most fashionable "coming out" that society ever knew. The first song sparrow or bluebird or robin in spring, or the first hepatica or arbutus or violet, or the first clover or pond-lily in summer — must we demand some mystic password of them? Must we not love them for their own sake, ere they will seem worthy of our love?

To convert natural facts into metaphysical values, or into moral or poetic values — in short, to make literature out of science — is a high achievement, and is worthy of Emerson at his best, but to claim that this is their sole or main use is to push idealism to the extreme. The poet, the artist, the nature writer not only mixes his colors with his brains, he mixes them with his heart's blood. Hence his pictures attract us without doing violence to nature.

We will not deny Emerson his right to make poetry out of nature; we bless him for the inspiration he has drawn from this source, for his "Woodnotes," his "Humble-Bee," his "Titmouse," his "May-Day," his "Sea-Shore," his "Snow-Storm," and many other poems. But we must "quarrel" with him a little, to use one of his fa-

vorite words, for seeming to undervalue the facts of natural science, as such, and to belittle the works of the natural historian because he does not give us poetry and lessons in morals instead of botany and geology and ornithology, pure and simple. "Everything," he says, "should be treated poetically — law, politics, housekeeping, money. A judge and a banker must drive their craft poetically, as well as a dancer or a scribe. That is, they must exert that higher vision which causes the object to become fluid and plastic." "If you would write a code, or logarithms, or a cook-book, you cannot spare the poetic impulse." "No one will doubt that battles can be fought poetically who reads Plutarch or Las Casas."

We are interested in the wild life around us because the lives of the wild creatures in a measure parallel our own; because they are the partakers of the same bounty of nature that we are; they are fruit of the same biological tree. We are interested in knowing how they get on in the world. Bird and bee, fish and man, are all made of one stuff, are all akin. The evolutionary impulse that brought man, brought his dog and horse. Did Emerson, indeed, only go to nature as he went to the bank, to make a draft upon it? Was his walk barren that brought him no image, no new idea? Was the day wasted that did not add a new line to his verse? He appears to have gone up and down

the land seeking images. He was so firmly persuaded that there is not a passage in the human soul, perhaps not a shade of thought, but has its emblem in nature, that he was ever on the alert to discover these relations of his own mind to the external world. "I see the law of Nature equally exemplified in bar-room and in a saloon of the philosopher. I get instruction and the opportunities of my genius indifferently in all places, companies, and pursuits, so only there be antagonisms."

Emerson thought that science as such bereaved Nature of her charm. To the man of little or no imagination or sensibility to beauty, Nature has no charm anyhow, but if he have these gifts, they will certainly survive scientific knowledge, and be quickened and heightened by it.

After we have learned all that the astronomers can tell us about the midnight heavens, do we look up at the stars with less wonder and awe? After we have learned all that the chemist and the physicist can tell us about matter — its interior activities and its exterior laws and relations — do we admire and marvel less? After the geologist has told us all he has found out about the earth's crust and the rocks, when we quarry our building-stone, do we plough and hoe and plant its soil with less interest and veneration? No, science as the pursuit of truth causes light to spring out of the abysmal darkness, and enhances our love and

interest in Nature. Is the return of the seasons less welcome because we know the cause? Is an eclipse less startling because it occurs exactly on time? Science bereaves Nature of her dread and fearsomeness, it breaks the spell which the ignorance and credulity of men have cast upon her.

Emerson had little use for science except so far as it yielded him symbols and parables for his superscience. The electric spark did not kindle his interest unless it held an ethical fact for him; chemical reactions were dull affairs unless he could trace their laws in mental reactions. "Read chemistry a little," he said, "and you will quickly see that its laws and experiments will furnish an alphabet or vocabulary for all of your moral observations." He found a lesson in composition in the fact that the diamond and lampblack are the same substance differently arranged. Good writing, he said, is a chemical combination, and not a mechanical mixture. That is not the noblest chemistry that can extract sunshine from cucumbers, but that which can extract "honor from scamps, temperance from sots, energy from beggars, justice from thieves, benevolence from misers."

Though mindful of the birds and flowers and trees and rivers in his walks, it was mainly through his pressing need of figures and symbols for transcendental use. He says, "Whenever you enumer-

ate a physical law, I hear in it a moral law." His final interest was in the moral law. Unless the scientific fact you brought him had some moral value, it made little impression upon him.

He admits he is more interested to know "why the star form is so oft repeated in botany, and why the number five is such a favorite with Nature, than to understand the circulation of the sap and the formation of buds." His insight into Nature, and the prophetic character of his genius, are seen in many ways, among others in his anticipation or poetic forecast of the Darwinian theory of the origin of species, in 1853.

"We want a higher logic to put us in training for the laws of creation. How does the step forward from one species to a higher species of an existing genus take place? The ass is not the parent of the horse; no fish begets a bird. But the concurrence of new conditions necessitates a new object in which these conditions meet and flower. When the hour is struck in onward nature, announcing that all is ready for the birth of higher form and nobler function, not one pair of parents, but the whole consenting system thrills, yearns, and produces. It is a favorable aspect of planets and of elements."

In 1840 he wrote, "The method of advance in Nature is perpetual transformation." In the same year he wrote:

"There is no leap — not a shock of violence throughout nature. Man therefore must be predicted in the first chemical relation exhibited by the first atom. If we had eyes to see it, this bit of quartz would certify us of the necessity that man must exist as inevitably as the cities he has actually built."

X

How fruitful in striking and original men New England was in those days — poets, orators, picturesque characters! In Concord, Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Alcott; in Boston and Cambridge, Lowell, Longfellow, Norton, Holmes, Higginson, Father Taylor, Bancroft, Everett, and others, with Webster standing out like a Colossus on the New Hampshire granite. This crop of geniuses seems to have been the aftermath of the Revolution. Will our social and industrial revolution bring anything like another such a crop? Will the great World War produce another? Until now too much prosperity, too much mammon, too much "at ease in Zion" has certainly prevailed for another band of great idealists to appear.

Emerson could never keep his eyes off Webster. He was fairly hypnotized by the majesty and power of his mind and personality, and he recurs to him in page after page of his Journal. Webster was of primary stuff like the granite of his native hills, while such a man as Everett was of

the secondary formation, like the sandstone rocks. Emerson was delighted when he learned that Carlyle, "with those devouring eyes, with that portraying hand," had seen Webster. And this is the portrait Carlyle drew of him: "As a Logic-fencer, Advocate, or Parliamentary Hercules, one would incline to back him at first sight against all the extant world. The tanned complexion, that amorphous, crag-like face; the dull black eyes under their precipice of brows, like dull anthracite furnaces, needing only to be *blown;* the mastiff-mouth, accurately closed: — I have not traced as much of *silent Berserkir-rage*, that I remember of, in any other man."

Emerson's description and praise and criticism of Webster form some of the most notable pages in his Journal. In 1843, when Webster came to Concord as counsel in a famous case that was tried there, the fact so excited Emerson that he could not sleep. It was like the perturbation of a planet in its orbit when a large body passes near it. Emerson seems to have spent much time at the courthouse to hear and study him: "Webster quite fills our little town, and I doubt if I shall get settled down to writing until he has well gone from the county. He is a natural Emperor of men." He adjourned the court every day in true imperial fashion, simply by rising and taking his hat and looking the Judge coolly in the face, whereupon

the Judge "bade the Crier adjourn the Court." But when Emerson finally came to look upon him with the same feeling with which he saw one of those strong Paddies of the railroad, he lost his interest in the trial and did not return to the court in the afternoon. "The green fields on my way home were too fresh and fair, and forbade me to go again."

It was with profound grief that he witnessed the decline of Webster's political career, owing to his truckling to the Southern proslavery element, and to his increasing intemperance. To see the placid, transcendental Emerson "fighting mad," flaring up in holy wrath, read his criticisms of Webster, after Webster's defection — his moral collapse to win the South and his support of the Fugitive Slave Law. This got into Emerson's blood and made him think "daggers and tomahawks." He has this to say of a chance meeting with Webster in Boston, at this period: "I saw Webster on the street —but he was changed since I saw him last — black as a thunder-cloud, and careworn. . . . I did not wonder that he depressed his eyes when he saw me and would not meet my face."

In 1851 he said that some of Webster's late speeches and state papers were like "Hail Columbia" when sung at a slave-auction; then he follows with the terrible remark: "The word *liberty* in

the mouth of Mr. Webster sounds like the word *love* in the mouth of a courtezan."

The prizes or fancied prizes of politics seem to have corrupted all the great men of that day — Webster, Choate, Foote, Clay, Everett. Their "disgusting obsequiousness" to the South fired Emerson's wrath.

XI

The orthodox brethren of his time, and probably of our time also, I fancy, could make very little of Emerson's religion. It was the religion of the spirit and not of the utilitarian and matter-of-fact understanding. It identified man with God and made all nature symbolical of the spirit. He was never tired of repeating that all true prayers answered themselves — the spirit which the act of prayer begets in one's self is the answer. Your prayer for humility, for charity, for courage, begets these emotions in the mind. The devout asking comes from a perception of their value. Hence the only real prayers are for spiritual good. We converse with spiritual and invisible things only through the medium of our own hearts. The preliminary attitude of mind that moves us to face in this direction is the blessing. The soldier who, on the eve of battle, prays for courage, has already got what he asks for. Prayer for visible, material good is infidelity to the moral law. God is within you, more your better self than you are. Many

prayers are a rattling of empty husks. Emerson says the wise man in the storm prays God, not for safety from danger, but for deliverance from fear.

Although Emerson broke away from all religious forms, yet was there something back of them that he always respected, as do we all. He relates that one night at a hotel a stranger intruded into his chamber after midnight, claiming a share in it. "But after his lamp had smoked the chamber full, and I had turned round to the wall in despair, the man blew out his lamp, knelt down at his bedside, and made in low whispers a long earnest prayer. Then was the relation entirely changed between us. I fretted no more, but respected and liked him."

Contrasting his own case with that of so many young men who owed their religious training exclusively to Cambridge and other public institutions, he says: "How much happier was my star which rained on me influence of ancestral religion. The depth of the religious sentiment which I knew in my Aunt Mary, imbuing all her genius and derived to her from such hoarded family traditions, from so many godly lives and godly deeds of sainted kindred of Concord, Malden, York, was itself a culture, an education."

XII

A COURSE of ten lectures which he delivered in Boston in February, 1840, on the "Present Age" gave him little pleasure. He could not warm up,

get agitated, and so warm and agitate others: "A cold mechanical preparation for a delivery as decorous, — fine things, pretty things, wise things, — but no arrows, no axes, no nectar, no growling, no transpiercing, no loving, no enchantment." Because he lacked constitutional vigor, he could expend only, say, twenty-one hours on each lecture, if he would be able and ready for the next. If he could only rally the lights and mights of sixty hours into twenty, he said, he should hate himself less. Self-criticism was a notable trait with him. Of self-praise he was never guilty. His critics and enemies rarely said severer things of him than he said of himself. He was almost morbidly conscious of his own defects, both as a man and as a writer. There are many pages of self-criticism in the Journals, but not one of self-praise. In 1842 he writes: "I have not yet adjusted my relation to my fellows on the planet, or to my own work. Always too young, or too old, I do not justify myself; how can I satisfy others?" Later he sighs, "If only I could be set aglow!" He had wished for a professorship, or for a pulpit, much as he reacted from the church — something to give him the stimulus of a stated task. Some friend recommended an Abolition campaign to him: "I doubt not a course in mobs would do me good."

Then he refers to his faults as a writer: "I think I have material enough to serve my country-

men with thought and music, if only it was not scraps. But men do not want handfuls of gold dust but ingots."

Emerson felt his own bardic character, but lamented that he had so few of the bardic gifts. At the age of fifty-nine he says: "I am a bard least of bards. I cannot, like them, make lofty arguments in stately, continuous verse, constraining the rocks, trees, animals, and the periodic stars to say my thoughts, — for that is the gift of great poets; but I am a bard because I stand near them, and apprehend all they utter, and with pure joy hear that which I also would say, and, moreover, I speak interruptedly words and half stanzas which have the like scope and aim:

"What I cannot declare, yet cannot all withhold."

There is certainly no over-valuation in this sentence, made when he was sixty-two: "In the acceptance that my papers find among my thoughtful countrymen, in these days, I cannot help seeing how limited is their reading. If they read only the books that I do, they would not exaggerate so wildly." Two years before that he had said, "I often think I could write a criticism of Emerson that would hit the white."

Emerson was a narrow-chested, steeple-shouldered man with a tendency to pulmonary disease, against which he made a vigorous fight all his days.

He laments his feeble physical equipment in his poem, "Terminus":

> "Curse, if thou wilt, thy sires,
> Bad husbands of their fires,
> Who, when they gave thee breath,
> Failed to bequeath
> The needful sinew stark as once,
> The Baresark marrow to thy bones,
> But left a legacy of ebbing veins,
> Inconstant heat and nerveless reins, —
> Amid the Muses, left thee deaf and dumb,
> Amid the gladiators, halt and numb."

And yet, looking back near the end of his life, he says that considering all facts and conditions he thinks he has had triumphant health.

XIII

Emerson's wisdom and catholicity of spirit always show in his treatment of the larger concerns of life and conduct. How remarkable is this passage written in Puritanic New England in 1842:

I hear with pleasure that a young girl in the midst of rich, decorous Unitarian friends in Boston is well-nigh persuaded to join the Roman Catholic Church. Her friends, who are also my friends, lamented to me the growth of this inclination. But I told them that I think she is to be greatly congratulated on the event. She has lived in great poverty of events. In form and years a woman, she is still a child, having had no experiences, and although of a fine, liberal, susceptible, expanding nature, has never yet found any worthy object of attention; has not been in love, nor been called out by any taste, except lately by music, and sadly wants adequate objects. In this church, perhaps, she shall find what she needs, in a power to call out the

slumbering religious sentiment. It is unfortunate that the guide who has led her into this path is a young girl of a lively, forcible, but quite external character, who teaches her the historical argument for the Catholic faith. I told A. that I hoped she would not be misled by attaching any importance to that. If the offices of the church attracted her, if its beautiful forms and humane spirit draw her, if St. Augustine and St. Bernard, Jesus and Madonna, cathedral music and masses, then go, for thy dear heart's sake, but do not go out of this icehouse of Unitarianism, all external, into an icehouse again of external. At all events, I charged her to pay no regard to dissenters, but to suck that orange thoroughly.

And this on the Church and the common people written the year before:

The Church aërates my good neighbors and serves them as a somewhat stricter and finer ablution than a clean shirt or a bath or a shampooing. The minister is a functionary and the meeting-house a functionary; they are one and, when they have spent all their week in private and selfish action, the Sunday reminds them of a need they have to stand again in social and public and ideal relations beyond neighborhood, — higher than the town-meeting — to their fellow men. They marry, and the minister who represents this high public, celebrates the fact; their child is baptized, and again they are published by his intervention. One of their family dies, he comes again, and the family go up publicly to the church to be publicised or churched in this official sympathy of mankind. It is all good as far as it goes. It is homage to the Ideal Church, which they have not: which the actual Church so foully misrepresents. But it is better so than nohow. These people have no fine arts, no literature, no great men to boswellize, no fine speculation to entertain their family board

or their solitary toil with. Their talk is of oxen and pigs and hay and corn and apples. Whatsoever liberal aspirations they at any time have, whatsoever spiritual experiences, have looked this way, and the Church is their fact for such things. It has not been discredited in their eyes as books, lectures, or living men of genius have been. It is still to them the accredited symbol of the religious Idea. The Church is not to be defended against any spiritualist clamoring for its reform, but against such as say it is expedient to shut it up and have none, this much may be said. It stands in the history of the present time as a high school for the civility and mansuetude of the people. (I might prefer the Church of England or of Rome as the medium of those superior ablutions described above, only that I think the Unitarian Church, like the Lyceum, as yet an open and uncommitted organ, free to admit the ministrations of any inspired man that shall pass by: whilst the other churches are committed and will exclude him.)

I should add that, although this is the real account to be given of the church-going of the farmers and villagers, yet it is not known to them, only felt. Do you not suppose that it is some benefit to a young villager who comes out of the woods of New Hampshire to Boston and serves his apprenticeship in a shop, and now opens his own store, to hang up his name in bright gold letters a foot long? His father could not write his name: it is only lately that he could: the name is mean and unknown: now the sun shines on it: all men, all women, fairest eyes read it. It is a fact in the great city. Perhaps he shall be successful and make it wider known: shall leave it greatly brightened to his son. His son may be head of a party: governor of the state: a poet: a powerful thinker: and send the knowledge of this name over the habitable earth. By all these suggestions, he is at least made responsible

and thoughtful by his public relation of a seen and aërated name.

Let him modestly accept those hints of a more beautiful life which he meets with; how to do with few and easily gotten things: but let him seize with enthusiasm the opportunity of doing what he can, for the virtues are natural to each man and the talents are little perfections.

Let him hope infinitely with a patience as large as the sky.

Nothing is so young and untaught as time.

How wise is his saying that we do not turn to the books of the Bible — St. Paul and St. John — to start us on our task, as we do to Marcus Aurelius, or the Lives of the philosophers, or to Plato, or Plutarch, "because the Bible wears black clothes"! "It comes with a certain official claim against which the mind revolts. The Bible has its own nobilities — might well be charming if left simply on its merits, as other books are, but this, 'You must,' 'It is your duty,' in connection with it, repels. 'T is like the introduction of martial law into Concord. If you should dot our farms with picket lines, and I could not go or come across lots without a pass, I should resist, or else emigrate. If Concord were as beautiful as Paradise, it would be as detestable to me."

In his essays and letters Emerson gives one the impression of never using the first words that come to mind, nor the second, but the third or fourth; always a sense of selection, of deliberate choice. To use words in a novel way, and impart

a little thrill of surprise, seemed to be his aim. This effort of selection often mars his page. He is rarely carried away by his thought, but he snares or captures it with a word. He does not feel first and think second; he thinks first, and the feeling does not always follow. He dearly loved writing; it was the joy of his life, but it was a conscious intellectual effort. It was often a kind of walking on stilts; his feet are not on the common ground. And yet — and yet — what a power he was, and how precious his contributions!

He says in his Journal, "I have observed long since that to give the thought a full and just expression I must not prematurely utter it." This hesitation, this studied selection robs him of the grace of felicity and spontaneity. The compensation is often a sense of novelty and a thrill of surprise. Moreover, he avoids the commonplace and the cheap and tedious. His product is always a choice one, and is seen to have a quality of its own. No page has more individuality than his, and none is so little like the page of the ordinary professional writer.

'T is a false note to speak of Emerson's doctrines, as Henry James did. He had no doctrines. He had leading ideas, but he had no system, no argument. It was his attitude of mind and spirit that was significant and original. He would have nothing to do with stereotyped opinions. What

he said to-day might contradict what he said yesterday, or what he might say to-morrow. No matter, the spirit was the same. Truth is a sphere that has opposite poles. Emerson more than any other writer stood for the contradictory character of spiritual truth. Truth is what we make it — what takes the imprint of one's mind; it is not a definite something like gold or silver, it is any statement that fits our mental make-up, that comes home to us. What comes home in one mood may not come home in another.

Emerson had no creed, he had no definite ideas about God. Personality and impersonality might both be affirmed of Absolute Being, and what may not be affirmed of it in our own minds?

The good of such a man as Emerson is not in his doctrines, but in his spirit, his heroic attitude, his consonance with the universal mind. His thought is a tremendous solvent; it digests and renders fluid the hard facts of life and experience.

XIV

Emerson records in his Journal: "I have been writing and speaking what were once called novelties, for twenty-five or thirty years, and have not now one disciple. Why? Not that what I said was not true; not that it has not found intelligent receivers; but because it did not go from any wish in me to bring men to me, but to themselves.

I delight in driving them from me. What could I do, if they came to me? — they would interrupt and encumber me. This is my boast that I have no school follower. I should account it a measure of the impurity of insight, if it did not create independence."

It is never easy to stray far from the master in high moral, æsthetic, and literary matters and be on the safe side; we are only to try to escape his individual bias, to break over his limitations and "brave the landscape's look" with our own eyes. We are to be more on guard against his affinities, his unconscious attractions and repulsions, than against his ethical and intellectual conclusions, if one may make that distinction, which I know is hazardous business. We readily impose our own limitations upon others and see the world as old when we are old.

Emerson criticized Carlyle because Carlyle was not Emerson, just as Carlyle criticized Emerson because he was not Carlyle. We are all poor beggars in this respect; each of us is the victim of his own demon. Beware of the predilection of the master! When his temperament impels him he is no longer a free man.

We touch Emerson's limitations in his failure to see anything in Hawthorne's work; they had "no inside to them"; "it would take him and Alcott together to make a man"; and, again, in his

rather contemptuous disposal of Poe as "the jingle man" and his verdict upon Shelley as "never a poet"! The intellectual content of Shelley's work is not great; but that he was not a poet, in fact that he was anything else but a poet, though not of the highest order, is contrary to the truth, I think. Limitations like this are not infrequent in Emerson. Yet Emerson was a great critic of men and of books. A highly interesting volume showing him in this character could be compiled from the Journals.

Emerson and Hawthorne were near neighbors for several years. Emerson liked the man better than his books. They once had a good long walk together; they walked to Harvard village and back, occupying a couple of days and walking about twenty miles a day. They had much conversation — talked of Scott and Landor and others. They found the bar-rooms at the inns cold and dull places. The Temperance Society had emptied them. Hawthorne tried to smoke a cigar in one of them, but "was soon out on the piazza." Hawthorne, Emerson said, was more inclined to play Jove than Mercury. It is a pleasing picture — these two men, so unlike, but both typical of New England and both men of a high order of genius, walking in friendly converse along the country roads in the golden September days over seventy years ago. Emerson always regretted that he never succeeded

in "conquering a friendship" with Hawthorne, mainly because they had so few traits in common. To the satisfaction of silent intercourse with men Emerson was clearly a stranger. There must be an interchange of ideas; the feeling of comradeship, the communion of congenial souls was not enough. Hawthorne, shy, silent, rather gloomy, yet there must have been a charm about his mere presence that more than made up for his want of conversation. His silence was golden. Emerson was a transcendental Yankee and was always bent on driving sharp bargains in the interchange of ideas with the persons he met. He did not propose to swap horses or watches or jack-knives, but he would swap ideas with you day in and day out. If you had no ideas to swap, he lost interest in you.

The wisdom of a great creative artist like Hawthorne does not necessarily harden into bright epigrammatic sayings or rules for the conduct of life, and the available intellectual content of his works to the Emersonian type of mind may be small; but his interior, his emotional and imaginative richness may much more than make it up. The scholar, the sayer of things, must always rank below the creator, or the maker of things.

Philosophers contradict themselves like other mortals. Here and there in his Journals Emerson rails against good nature, and says "tomahawks are better." "Why should they call me good-

natured? I, too, like puss, have a tractile claw." And he declares that he likes the sayers of No better than the sayers of Yes, and that he preferred hard clouds, hard expressions, and hard manners. In another mood, or from another point of view, he says of a man, "Let him go into his closet and pray the Divinity to make him so great as to be good-natured." And again, "How great it is to do a little, as, for instance, to deserve the praise of good nature, or of humility, or of punctuality."

Emerson's characterization of himself as always a painter is interesting. People, he said, came to his lectures with expectation that he was to realize the Republic he described, and they ceased to come when they found this reality no nearer: "They mistook me. I am and always was a painter. I paint still with might and main and choose the best subject I can. Many have I seen come and go with false hopes and fears, and dubiously affected by my pictures. But I paint on." "I portray the ideal, not the real," he might have added. He was a poet-seer and not a historian. He was a painter of ideas, as Carlyle was a painter of men and events. Always is there an effort at vivid and artistic expression. If his statement does not kindle the imagination, it falls short of his aim. He visualizes his most subtle and abstract conceptions — sees the idea wedded to its correlative in the actual world. A new figure, a fresh simile

gave him a thrill of pleasure. He went hawking up and down the fields of science, of trade, of agriculture, of nature, seeking them. He thinks in symbols, he paints his visions of the ideal with pigments drawn from the world all about him. To call such men as Emerson and Carlyle painters is only to emphasize their artistic temperaments. Their seriousness, their devotion to high moral and intellectual standards, only lift them, as they do Whitman, out of the world of mere decorative art up to the world of heroic and creative art where art as such does not obtrude itself.

XV

Emerson wonders why it is that man eating does not attract the imagination or attract the artist: "Why is our diet and table not agreeable to the imagination, whilst all other creatures eat without shame? We paint the bird pecking at fruit, the browsing ox, the lion leaping on his prey, but no painter ever ventured to draw a man eating. The difference seems to consist in the presence or absence of the world at the feast. The diet is base, be it what it may, that is hidden in caves or cellars or houses. . . . Did you ever eat your bread on the top of a mountain, or drink water there? Did you ever camp out with lumbermen or travellers in the prairie? Did you ever eat the poorest rye or oatcake with a beautiful maiden in the wilder-

ness? and did you not find that the mixture of sun and sky with your bread gave it a certain mundane savour and comeliness? "

I do not think Emerson hits on the true explanation of why man feeding is not an attractive subject for the painter. It is not that the diet is base and is hidden in caves and cellars, or that the world is not present at the feast. It is because eating is a purely selfish animal occupation; there is no touch of the noble or the idyllic or the heroic in it. In the act man confesses his animal nature; he is no longer an Emerson, a Dante, a Plato — he is simply a physiological contrivance taking in nutriment. The highest and the lowest are for the moment on the same level. The lady and her maid, the lord and his lackey are all one. Eating your bread on a mountain-top or in the camp of lumbermen or with a beautiful maiden in the wilderness adds a new element. Here the picture has all nature for a background and the imagination is moved. The rye and the oatcake now become a kind of heavenly manna, or, as Fitzgerald has it, under such conditions the wilderness is Paradise enow. The simple act of feeding does not now engross the attention. Associate with the act of eating any worthy or noble idea, and it is at once lifted to a higher level. A mother feeding her child, a cook passing food to the tramp at the door or to other hungry and forlorn wayfarers, or soldiers

pausing to eat their rations in the field, or fishermen beside the stream, or the haymakers with their lunch under a tree — in all such incidents there are pictorial elements because the least part of it all to the looker-on is the act of eating.

In Da Vinci's "Last Supper" the mere animal act of taking food plays no part; the mind is occupied with higher and more significant things. A suggestion of wine or of fruit in a painting may be agreeable, but from a suggestion of the kitchen and the cook we turn away. The incident of some of Washington's officers during the Revolution entertaining some British officers (an historical fact) on baked potatoes and salt would appeal to the artistic imagination. All the planting and reaping of the farmers is suggestive of our animal wants, as is so much of our whole industrial activity; but art looks kindly upon much of it, shows us more or less in partnership with primal energies. People surrounding a table after all signs of the dinner have been removed hold the elements of an agreeable picture, because that suggests conversation and social intercourse — a feast of reason and a flow of soul. We are no longer animals; we have moved up many degrees higher in the scale of human values.

Emerson's deep love and admiration for Carlyle come out many times in the Journals. No other literary man of his times moved and impressed him so profoundly. Their correspondence, which

lasted upwards of forty years, is the most valuable correspondence known to me in English literature. It is a history of the growth and development of these two remarkable minds.

I lately reread the Correspondence, mainly to bring my mind again in contact with these noble spirits, so much more exalted than any in our own time, but partly to see what new light the letters threw upon the lives of these two men.

There is little of the character of intimate and friendly letters in these remarkable documents. It is not Dear Tom or Dear Waldo. It is Dear Emerson or Dear Carlyle. They are not letters, they are epistles, like Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, or to the Thessalonians, or to the Romans. Each of them contains the fragments of a gospel that both were preaching, each in his own way, but at bottom the same — the beauty and majesty of the moral law. Let the heavens fall, the moral law and our duty to God and man will stand. These two men, so different in character and temperament, were instantly drawn together by that magnet — the moral sentiment. Carlyle's works were occupied almost entirely with men — with history, biography, political events, and government; Emerson's with ideas, nature, and poetry; yet the bed rock in each was the same. Both preached an evangel, but how different!

Emerson makes a note of the days on which he

received a letter from, or wrote one to, his great Scottish friend. Both were important events with him. It is evident that Emerson makes more of an effort to write his best in these letters than does Carlyle. Carlyle tosses his off with more ease and unconscious mastery. The exchange is always in favor of the Scot. Carlyle was, of course, the more prodigious personality, and had the advantage in the richness and venerableness of the Old World setting. But Emerson did not hesitate to discount him in his letters and in his Journals, very wisely sometimes, not so wisely at others.

"O Carlyle, the merit of glass is not to be seen, but to be seen through; but every crystal and lamina of the Carlyle glass is visible." Of course Carlyle might reply that stained glass has other merits than transparency, or he might ask: Why should an author's style be compared to glass anyhow, since it is impossible to dissociate it from the matter of his discourse? It is not merely to reveal truth; it is also to enhance its beauty. There is the charm and witchery of style, as in Emerson's own best pages, as well as the worth of the subject-matter. Is it not true that in the description of any natural object or scene or event we want something more than to see it through a perfectly transparent medium? We want the added charm or illusion of the writer's own way of seeing it, the hue of his own spirit.

I think we may admit all this — doubtless Emerson would admit it — and yet urge that Carlyle's style had many faults of the kind Emerson indicated. It thrusts itself too much upon the reader's attention. His prose is at the best, as in the "Life of Stirling," when it is most transparent and freest from mannerisms. Carlyle's manner at its best is very pleasing; at its worst it becomes a wearisome mannerism. When a writer's style gets into a rut his reader is not happy. Ease, flexibility, transparency, though it be colored transparency, are among the merits we want.

The most just and penetrating thing Emerson ever said about Carlyle is recorded in his Journal in 1847: "In Carlyle, as in Byron, one is much more struck with the rhetoric than with the matter. He has manly superiority rather than intellectuality, and so makes good hard hits all the time. There is more character than intellect in every sentence, herein strongly resembling Samuel Johnson." Criticism like this carries the force and conviction of a scientific analysis.

The Journals abound in similar illuminating bits of criticism directed to nearly all the more noted authors of English literature, past and present. In science we do want an absolutely colorless, transparent medium, but in literature the personality of the writer is everything. The born writer gives us facts and ideas steeped in his own quality as a

man. Take out of Carlyle's works, or out of Emerson's, or out of Arnold's, the savor of the man's inborn quality — the savor of that which acts over and above his will — and we have robbed them of their distinctive quality. Literature is always truth of some sort, plus a man. No one knew this better than Emerson himself. Another remark of Emerson's, made when he was twenty-seven years old, has high literary value:

"There is no beauty in words except in their collocation."

It is not beautiful words that make beautiful poetry, or beautiful prose, but ordinary words beautifully arranged. The writer who hopes by fine language to invoke fine ideas is asking the tailor to turn him out a fine man. First get your great idea, and you will find it is already fitly clothed. The image of the clothes in this connection is, of course, a very inadequate and misleading one, since language is the thought or its vital integument, and not merely its garment. We often praise a writer for his choice of words, and Emerson himself says in the same paragraph from which I quote the above: "No man can write well who thinks there is no choice of words for him." There is always a right word and every other than that is wrong. There is always the best word, or the best succession of words to give force and vividness to the idea. All painters use the same colors,

all musicians use the same notes, all sculptors use the same marble, all architects use the same materials and all writers use essentially the same words, their arrangement and combination alone making the difference in the various products. Nature uses the same elements in her endless variety of living things; their different arrangement and combinations, and some interior necessity which we have to call the animating principle, is the secret of the individuality of each.

Of course we think in words or images, and no man can tell which is first, or if there is any first in such matters — the thought or the word — any more than the biochemist can tell us which is first in the living body, the carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, and so on, or the living force that weaves itself a corporeal garment out of these elements.

XVI

Emerson hungered for the quintessence of things, their last concentrated, intensified meanings, for the pith and marrow of men and events, and not for their body and bulk. He wanted the ottar of roses and not a rose garden, the diamond and not a mountain of carbon. This bent gives a peculiar beauty and stimulus to his writings, while at the same time it makes the reader crave a little more body and substance. The succulent leaf and stalk of certain garden vegetables is better to one's lik-

ing than the more pungent seed. If Emerson could only have given us the essence of Father Taylor's copious, eloquent, flesh-and-blood discourses, how it would have delighted us! or if he could only have got the silver out of Alcott's bewitching moonshine — that would have been worth while!

But why wish Emerson had been some other than he was? He was at least the quintessence of New England Puritanism, its last and deepest meaning and result, lifted into the regions of ethics and æsthetics.

II

FLIES IN AMBER

It has been the fashion among our younger writers to speak slightingly and flippantly of Emerson, referring to him as outworn, and as the apostle of the obvious. This view is more discreditable to the young people than is their criticism damaging to Emerson. It can make little difference to Emerson's fame, but it would be much more becoming in our young writers to garland his name with flowers than to utter these harsh verdicts.

It is undoubtedly true that Emerson entered into and influenced the lives of more choice spirits, both men and women, during the past generation than did any other American author. Whether he still does so would be interesting to know. We who have felt his tonic and inspiring influence can but hope so. Yet how impossible he seems in times like these in which we live, when the stars of the highest heaven of the spirit which illumine his page are so obscured or blotted out by the dust and the fog of our hurrying, materialistic age! Try to think of Emerson spending a winter going about the Western States reading to miscellaneous audiences essays like those that now make up

his later volumes. What chance would he stand, even in university towns, as against the " movies " (a word so ugly I hesitate to write it) in the next street?

I once defended Emerson against a criticism of Matthew Arnold's. It is true, as Arnold says, that Emerson is not a great writer, except on rare occasions. Now and then, especially in his earlier essays, there is logical texture and cohesion in his pages; development, evolution, growth; one thing follows another naturally, and each paragraph follows from what went before. But most of his later writings are a kind of patchwork; unrelated ideas are in juxtaposition; the incongruities are startling. All those chapters, I suppose, were read as lectures to miscellaneous audiences in which the attention soon became tired or blunted if required to follow a closely reasoned argument. Pictures and parables and startling affirmations suited better. Emerson did not stoop to his audience; there was no condescension in him. The last time I heard him, which was in Washington in the early seventies, his theme was " Manners," and much of it passed over the heads of his audience.

Certain of Emerson's works must strike the average reader, when he first looks into them, as a curious medley of sense and wild extravagance, utterly lacking in the logical sequence of the best

prose, and often verging on the futile and the absurd. Yet if one does not get discouraged, one will soon see running through them veins of the purest gold of the spirit, and insight into Nature's ways, that redeem and more than redeem them.

I recall that when, as a young man, I looked into them the first time, I could make nothing of them. I was fresh from reading the standard essayists and philosophers of English literature — Addison, Steele, Cowley, Johnson, Locke — and the poems of Pope, Young, and Cowper, all of ethical import and value, and sometimes didactic, but never mystical and transcendental, and the plunge into Emerson was a leap into a strange world. But a few years later, when I opened his essays again, they were like spring-water to parched lips. Now, in my old age, I go back to him with a half-sad pleasure, as one goes back to the scenes of one's youth.

Emerson taught us a mingled poetic and prophetic way of looking at things that stays with us. The talented English woman Anne Gilchrist said we had outgrown Emerson; had absorbed all he had to give us; and were leaving him behind. Of course he was always a teacher and preacher, in the thrall of his priestly inheritance, and to that extent we leave him behind as we do not leave behind works of pure literature.

As to continuity, some of his essays have much more of it than others. In his "Nature" the

theme is unfolded, there is growth and evolution; and his first and second series of Essays likewise show it. The essays on "Character," on "Self-Reliance," on the "Over-Soul," meet the requirements of sound prose. And if there is any sounder prose than can be found in his "Nature," or in his "English Traits," or in his historical and biographical addresses, I do not know where to find it. How flat and commonplace seem the works of some of the masters of prose to whom Arnold alludes — Cicero, Voltaire, Addison, Swift — compared with those of Emerson! A difference like that between the prismatic hues of raindrops suspended from a twig or a trellis in the sunlight and the water in the spring or the brook.

But in Emerson's later work there is, as geologists say, nonconformity between the strata which make up his paragraphs. There is only juxtaposition. Among his later papers the one on "Wealth" flows along much more than the one on "Fate." Emerson believed in wealth. Poverty did not attract him. It was not suited to his cast of mind. Poverty was humiliating. Emerson accumulated a fortune, and it added to his self-respect. Thoreau's pride in his poverty must have made Emerson shiver.

Although Arnold refused to see in Emerson a great writer, he did admit that he was eminent as the "friend and aider of those who would live in

the spirit"; but Arnold apparently overlooked the fact that, devoid of the merit of good literature, no man's writings could have high spiritual value. Strip the Bible of its excellence as literature, and you have let out its life-blood. Literature is not a varnish or a polish. It is not a wardrobe. It is the result of a vital, imaginative relation of the man to his subject. And Emerson's subject-matter at its best always partakes of the texture of his own mind. It is admitted that there are times when his writing lacks organization, — the vital ties, — when his rhetoric is more like a rocking-horse or a merry-go-round than like the real thing. But there are few writers who do not mark time now and then, and Emerson is no exception; and I contend that at his best his work has the sequence and evolution of all great prose. And yet, let me say that if Emerson's power and influence depended upon his logic, he would be easily disposed of. Fortunately they do not. They depend, let me repeat, upon his spiritual power and insight, and the minor defects I am pointing out are only like flies in amber.

He thought in images more strictly than any other contemporary writer, and was often desperately hard-put to it to make his thought wed his image. He confessed that he did not know how to argue, and that he could only say what he saw. But he had spiritual vision; we cannot deny this, though

we do deny him logical penetration. I doubt if there ever was a writer of such wide and lasting influence as Emerson, in whom the logical sense was so feeble and shadowy. He had in this respect a feminine instead of a masculine mind, an intuitional instead of a reasoning one. It made up in audacious, often extravagant, affirmations what it lacked in syllogistic strength. The logical mind, with its sense of fitness and proportion, does not strain or overstrain the thread that knits the parts together. It does not jump to conclusions, but reaches them step by step. The flesh and blood of feeling and sentiment may clothe the obscure framework of logic, but the logic is there all the same. Emerson's mind was as devoid of logical sense as are our remembered dreams, or as Christian Science is of science. He said that truth ceased to be such when polemically stated. Occasionally he amplifies and unfolds an idea, as in the essays already mentioned, but generally his argument is a rope of sand. Its strength is the strength of the separate particles. He is perpetually hooking things together that do not go together. It is like putting an apple on a pumpkin vine, or an acorn on a hickory. "A club foot and a club wit." "Why should we fear," he says, "to be crushed by the same elements — we who are made up of the same elements?" But were we void of fear, we should be crushed much oftener than we are. The electricity in our bodies

does not prevent us from being struck by lightning, nor the fluids in our bodies prevent the waters from drowning us, nor the carbon in our bodies prevent carbon dioxide from poisoning us.

One of Emerson's faults as a writer arose from his fierce hunger for analogy. "I would rather have a good symbol of my thought," he confesses, "than the suffrage of Kant or of Plato." "All thinking is analogizing, and it is the use of life to learn metonymy." His passion for analogy betrays him here and there in his Journals, as in this passage: "The water we wash with never speaks of itself, nor does fire or wind or tree. Neither does a noble natural man," and so forth. If water and fire and wind and tree were in the habit of talking of anything else, this kind of a comparison would not seem so spurious.

A false note in rhetoric like the above you will find in Emerson oftener than a false note in taste. I find but one such in the Journals: "As soon as a man gets his suction-hose down into the great deep, he belongs to no age, but is an eternal man." That I call an ignoble image, and one cannot conceive of Emerson himself printing such a passage.

We hear it said that Whittier is the typical poet of New England. It may be so, but Emerson is much the greater poet. Emerson is a poet of the world, while Whittier's work is hardly known abroad at all. Emerson is known wherever the

English language is spoken. Not that Emerson is in any sense a popular poet, such as, for example, Burns or Byron, but he is the poet of the choice few, of those who seek poetry that has some intellectual or spiritual content. Whittier wrote many happy descriptions of New England scenes and seasons. "The Tent on the Beach" and "Snow-Bound" come readily to mind; "The Playmate" is a sweet poem, full of tender and human affection, but not a great poem. Whittier had no profundity. Is not a Quaker poet necessarily narrow? Whittier gave voice to the New England detestation of slavery, but by no means so forcibly and profoundly as did Emerson. He had a theology, but not a philosophy. I wonder if his poems are still read.

In his chapter called "Considerations by the Way," Emerson strikes this curious false note in his rhetoric: "We have a right to be here or we should not be here. We have the same right to be here that Cape Cod and Sandy Hook have to be there." As if Cape Cod or Cape Horn or Sandy Hook had any "rights"! This comparison of man with inanimate things occurs in both Emerson and Thoreau. Thoreau sins in this way at least once when he talks of the Attic wit of burning thorns and briars. There is a similar false note in such a careful writer as Dean Swift. He says to his young poet, "You are ever to try a good

poem as you would a sound pipkin, and if it rings well upon the knuckle, be sure there is no flaw in it." Whitman compares himself with an inanimate thing in the line:

"I reckon I behave no prouder than the level I plant my house by."

But he claims no moral or human attributes or rights for his level; it simply acts in obedience to the principle it embodies — the law of gravitation.

The lecturer "gets away" with such things better than the writer. An audience is not critical about such matters, but the reader takes note of them. Mosaics will do on the platform, or in the pulpit, but will not bear the nearer view of the study.

The incongruities of Emerson are seen in such passages as this: "Each plant has its parasites, and each created thing its lover and poet," as if there were any relation between the two clauses of this sentence — between parasites and lovers and poets! As if one should say, "Woodchucks are often alive with fleas, and our fruit trees bloom in May."

Emerson was so emboldened by what had been achieved through the mastery of the earth's forces that he was led to say that "a wise geology shall yet make the earthquake harmless, and the volcano an agricultural resource." But this seems expecting too much. We have harnessed the

lightnings, but the earthquake is too deep and too mighty for us. It is a steed upon which we cannot lay our hands. The volcano we may draw upon for heat and steam, as we do upon the winds and streams for power, but it is utterly beyond our control. The bending of the earth's crust beneath the great atmospheric waves is something we cannot bridle. The tides by sea as by land are beyond us.

Emerson had the mind of the prophet and the seer, and was given to bold affirmations. The old Biblical distinction between the scribes and the man who speaks with authority still holds. We may say of all other New England essayists and poets — Lowell, Whipple, Tuckerman, Holmes, Hillard, Whittier, Longfellow — that they are scribes only. Emerson alone speaks as one having authority — the authority of the spirit. " Thus saith the Lord " — it is this tone that gives him his authority the world over.

I never tire of those heroic lines of his in which he sounds a battle-cry to the spirit:

> "Though love repine, and reason chafe,
> There came a voice without reply, —
> "'T is man's perdition to be safe,
> When for the truth he ought to die.'"

The last time I saw Emerson was at the Holmes seventieth-birthday breakfast in 1879. The serious break in his health had resulted in a marked aphasia, so that he could not speak the name of his nearest friend, nor answer the simplest question.

Yet he was as serene as ever. Let the heavens fall — what matters it to me? his look seemed to say.

Emerson's face had in it more of what we call the divine than had that of any other author of his time — that wonderful, kindly, wise smile — the smile of the soul — not merely the smile of good nature, but the smile of spiritual welcome and hospitality.

Emerson had quality. A good Emersonian will recognize any passage from the Sage in a book of quotations, even if no name is appended.

We speak of Emerson as outgrown, yet only yesterday I saw in J. Arthur Thomson's recent Gifford Lectures on "The System of Animate Nature," repeated quotations from Emerson, mainly from his poetry. I think he is no more likely to be outgrown than are Wordsworth and Arnold. Yet I do not set the same value upon his poetry that I do upon that of Wordsworth at his best.

Emerson is the last man we should expect to be guilty of misinterpreting Nature, yet he does so at times. He does so in this passage: "If Nature wants a thumb, she makes it at the cost of the arms and legs." As if the arm were weaker or less efficient because of the thumb. What would man's power be as a tool-using animal without his strong, opposable thumb? His grasp would be gone.

He says truly that the gruesome, the disgusting, the repellent are not fit subjects for cabinet pictures. The "sacred subjects" to which he objects probably refer to the Crucifixion — the nails through the hands and feet, and the crown of thorns. But to jump from that fact to the assertion that Nature covers up the skeleton on the same grounds, is absurd. Do not all vertebrates require an osseous system? In the radiates and articulates she puts the bony system on the outside, but when she comes to her backbone animals, she perforce puts her osseous system beneath. She weaves her tissues and integuments of flesh and skin and hair over it, not to hide it, but to use it. Would you have a man like a jellyfish?

The same want of logic marks Carlyle's mind when he says: "The drop by continually falling bores its way through the hardest rock. The hasty torrent rushes over it with hideous uproar, and leaves no trace behind." But give the "hasty torrent" the same time you give the drop, and see what it will do to the rock!

Emerson says, "A little more or a little less does not signify anything." But it does signify in this world of material things. Is one man as impressive as an army, one tree as impressive as a forest? "Scoop a little water in the hollow of your palm; take up a handful of shore sand; well, these are the elements. What is the beach but

acres of sand? what is the ocean but cubic miles of water? A little more or a little less signifies nothing." It is the mass that does impress us, as Niagara does, as the midnight sky does. It is not as parts of this "astonishing astronomy," or as a "part of the round globe under the optical sky" — we do not think of that, but the imagination is moved by the vast sweep of the ocean and its abysmal depths, and its ceaseless rocking. In some cases we see the All in the little; the law that spheres a tear spheres a globe. That Nature is seen in leasts is an old Latin maxim. The soap bubble explains the rainbow. Steam from the boiling kettle gave Watt the key to the steam engine; but a tumbler of water throws no light on the sea, though its sweating may help explain the rain.

Emerson quotes Goethe as saying, "The beautiful is a manifestation of secret laws of nature which, but for this appearance, had been forever concealed from us." As if beauty were an objective reality instead of a subjective experience! As if it were something out there in the landscape that you may gather your arms full of and bring in! If you are an artist, you may bring in your vision of it, pass it through your own mind, and thus embalm and preserve the beauty. Or if you are a poet, you may have a similar experience and reproduce it, humanized, in a poem. But the beauty is always a distilled and re-created, or, shall we

say, an incarnated beauty — a tangible and measurable something, like moisture in the air, or sugar in the trees, or quartz in the rocks. There is, and can be, no "science of beauty." Beauty, like truth, is an experience of the mind. It is the emotion you feel when in health you look from your door or window of a May morning. If you are ill, or oppressed with grief, or worried, you will hardly experience the emotion of the beautiful.

Emerson said he was warned by the fate of many philosophers not to attempt a definition of beauty. But in trying to describe it and characterize it he ran the same risk. "We ascribe beauty to that which is simple," he said; "which has no superfluous parts; which exactly answers its end; which stands related to all things; which is the mean of many extremes." Is a boot-jack beautiful? Is a crow-bar? Yet these are simple, they have no superfluous parts, they exactly serve their ends, they stand related to all things through the laws of chemistry and physics. A flower is beautiful, a shell on the beach is beautiful, a tree in full leaf, or in its winter nudity, is beautiful; but these things are not very simple. Complex things may be beautiful also. A village church may be beautiful no less than a Gothic cathedral. Emerson was himself a beautiful writer, a beautiful character, and his works are a priceless addition to literature.

"Go out of the house to see the moon," says Emerson, "and it is mere tinsel; it will not please as when its light shines upon your necessary journey." This is not true in my experience. The stars do not become mere tinsel, do they, when we go out to look at the overwhelming spectacle? Neither does the moon. Is it not a delight in itself to look at the full moon —

"The vitreous pour of the full moon, just tinged with blue,"

as Whitman says?

"The moon doth look round her with delight when the heavens are bare,"

says Wordsworth, and equally with delight do we regard the spectacle. The busy farmer in the fields rarely sees the beauty of Nature. He has not the necessary detachment. Put him behind his team and plough in the spring and he makes a pleasing picture to look upon, but the mind must be open to take in the beauty of Nature.

Of course Emerson is only emphasizing the fact of the beauty of utility, of the things we do, of the buildings we put up for use, and not merely for show. A hut, a log cabin in a clearing, a farmer's unpainted barn, all have elements of beauty. A man leading a horse to water, or foddering his cattle from a stack in a snow-covered field, or following his plough, is always pleasing. Every day I pass along a road by a wealthy man's estate and

see a very elaborate stone wall of cobblestones and cement which marks the boundary of his estate on the highway. The wall does not bend and undulate with the inequalities of the ground; its top is as level as a foundation wall; it is an offense to every passer-by; it has none of the simplicity that should mark a division wall; it is studied and elaborate, and courts your admiration. How much more pleasing a rough wall of field stone, or "wild stone," as our old wall-layer put it, with which the farmer separates his fields! No thought of looks, but only of utility. The showy, the highly ornate castle which the multimillionaire builds on his estate — would an artist ever want to put one of them in his picture? Beauty is likely to flee when we make a dead set at her.

Emerson's exaggerations are sometimes so excessive as to be simply amusing, as, when speaking of the feats of the imagination, he says, "My boots and chair and candlestick are fairies in disguise, meteors and constellations." The baseball, revolving as it flies, may suggest the orbs, or your girdle suggest the equator, or the wiping of your face on a towel suggest the absorption of the rain by the soil; but does the blacking of your shoes suggest anything celestial? Hinges and levers and fulcrums are significant, but one's old hat, or old boots, have not much poetic significance. An elm tree may suggest a cathedral, or a shell sug-

gest the rainbow, or the sparkling frost suggest diamonds, or the thread that holds the beads symbolize the law that strings the spheres, but a button is a button, a shoestring a shoestring, and a spade a spade, and nothing more.

I cherish and revere the name of Emerson so profoundly, and owe him such a debt, that it seems, after all, a pity to point out the flaws in his precious amber.

Let us keep alive the Emersonian memories: that such a man has lived and wrought among us. Let us teach our children his brave and heroic words, and plant our lives upon as secure an ethical foundation as he did. Let us make pilgrimages to Concord, and stand with uncovered heads beneath the pine tree where his ashes rest. He left us an estate in the fair land of the Ideal. He bequeathed us treasures that thieves cannot break through and steal, nor time corrupt, nor rust nor moth destroy.[1]

[1] At the onset of the author's last illness he attempted to rearrange and improve this essay, but was even then unequal to it, and, after a little shifting and editing, gave it up. "Do what you can with it," he said; and when I asked him if he could not add a few words to close it, he sat up in bed, and wrote the closing sentences, which proved to be the last he ever penned. — C. B.

III

ANOTHER WORD ON THOREAU

I

After Emerson, the name of no New England man of letters keeps greener and fresher than that of Thoreau. A severe censor of his countrymen, and with few elements of popularity, yet the quality of his thought, the sincerity of his life, and the nearness and perennial interest of his themes, as well as his rare powers of literary expression, win recruits from each generation of readers. He does not grow stale any more than Walden Pond itself grows stale. He is an obstinate fact there in New England life and literature, and at the end of his first centennial his fame is more alive than ever.

Thoreau was born in Concord, Massachusetts, July, 1817, and passed most of his life of forty-five years in his native town, minding his own business, as he would say, which consisted, for the most part, in spending at least the half of each day in the open air, winter and summer, rain and shine, and in keeping tab upon all the doings of wild nature about him and recording his observations in his Journal.

The two race strains that met in Thoreau, the Scottish and the French, come out strongly in his life and character. To the French he owes his vivacity, his lucidity, his sense of style, and his passion for the wild; for the French, with all their urbanity and love of art, turn to nature very easily. To the Scot he is indebted more for his character than for his intellect. From this source come his contrariness, his combativeness, his grudging acquiescence, and his pronounced mysticism. Thence also comes his genius for solitude. The man who in his cabin in the woods has a good deal of company "especially the mornings when nobody calls," is French only in the felicity of his expression. But there is much in Thoreau that is neither Gallic nor Scottish, but pure Thoreau.

The most point-blank and authoritative criticism within my knowledge that Thoreau has received at the hands of his countrymen came from the pen of Lowell about 1864, and was included in "My Study Windows." It has all the professional smartness and scholarly qualities which usually characterize Lowell's critical essays. Thoreau was vulnerable, both as an observer and as a literary craftsman, and Lowell lets him off pretty easily — too easily — on both counts.

The flaws he found in his nature lore were very inconsiderable: "Till he built his Walden shack he did not know that the hickory grew near Con-

cord. Till he went to Maine he had never seen phosphorescent wood — a phenomenon early familiar to most country boys. At forty he spoke of the seeding [*i. e.*, flowering][1] of the pine as a new discovery, though one should have thought that its gold-dust of blowing pollen might have earlier caught his eye."

As regards his literary craftsmanship, Lowell charges him only with having revived the age of *concetti* while he fancied himself going back to a preclassical nature, basing the charge on such a far-fetched comparison as that in which Thoreau declares his preference for " the dry wit of decayed cranberry-vines and the fresh Attic salt of the moss-beds " over the wit of the Greek sages as it comes to us in the " Banquet " of Xenophon — a kind of perversity of comparison all too frequent with Thoreau.

But though Lowell lets Thoreau off easily on these specific counts, he more than makes up by his sweeping criticism, on more general grounds, of his life and character. Here one feels that he overdoes the matter.

It is not true, in the sense which Lowell implies, that Thoreau's whole life was a search for the doctor. It was such a search in no other sense than that we are all in search of the doctor when we take

[1] See "Walking" in *Excursions*. He was under thirty-three when he made these observations (June, 1850).

a walk, or flee to the mountains or to the seashore, or seek to bring our minds and spirits in contact with "Nature's primal sanities." His search for the doctor turns out to be an escape from the conditions that make a doctor necessary. His wonderful activity, those long walks in all weathers, in all seasons, by night as well as by day, drenched by rain and chilled by frost, suggest a reckless kind of health. A doctor might wisely have cautioned him against such exposures. Nor was Thoreau a valetudinarian in his physical, moral, or intellectual fiber.

It is not true, as Lowell charges, that it was his indolence that stood in the way of his taking part in the industrial activities in which his friends and neighbors engaged, or that it was his lack of persistence and purpose that hindered him. It is not true that he was poor because he looked upon money as an unmixed evil. Thoreau's purpose was like adamant, and his industry in his own proper pursuits was tireless. He knew the true value of money, and he knew also that the best things in life are to be had without money and without price. When he had need of money, he earned it. He turned his hand to many things — land-surveying, lecturing, magazine-writing, growing white beans, doing odd jobs at carpentering, whitewashing, fence-building, plastering, and bricklaying.

Lowell's criticism amounts almost to a diatribe. He was naturally antagonistic to the Thoreau type of mind. Coming from a man near his own age, and a neighbor, Thoreau's criticism of life was an affront to the smug respectability and scholarly attainments of the class to which Lowell belonged. Thoreau went his own way, with an air of defiance and contempt which, no doubt, his contemporaries were more inclined to resent than we are at our distance. Shall this man in his hut on the shores of Walden Pond assume to lay down the law and the gospel to his elders and betters, and pass unrebuked, no matter on what intimate terms he claims to be with the gods of the woods and mountains? This seems to be Lowell's spirit.

"Thoreau's experiment," says Lowell, "actually presupposed all that complicated civilization which it theoretically abjured. He squatted on another man's land; he borrows an axe; his boards, his nails, his bricks, his mortar, his books, his lamp, his fish-hooks, his plough, his hoe, all turn state's evidence against him as an accomplice in the sin of that artificial civilization which rendered it possible that such a person as Henry D. Thoreau should exist at all." Very clever, but what of it? Of course Thoreau was a product of the civilization he decried. He was a product of his country and his times. He was born in Concord and early came under the influence of Emerson; he was a graduate

of Harvard University and all his life availed himself, more or less, of the accumulated benefits of state and social organizations. When he took a train to Boston, or dropped a letter in, or received one through, the post office, or read a book, or visited a library, or looked in a newspaper, he was a sharer in these benefits. He made no claims to living independently of the rest of mankind. His only aim in his Walden experiment was to reduce life to its lowest terms, to drive it into a corner, as he said, and question and cross-question it, and see, if he could, what it really meant. And he probably came as near cornering it there in his hut on Walden Pond as any man ever did anywhere, certainly in a way more pleasing to contemplate than did the old hermits in the desert, or than did Diogenes in his tub, though Lowell says the tub of the old Greek had a sounder bottom.

Lowell seemed to discredit Thoreau by attacking his philosophy and pointing out the contradictions and inconsistencies of a man who abjures the civilization of which he is the product, overlooking the fact that man's theories and speculations may be very wide of the truth as we view it, and yet his life be noble and inspiring. Now Thoreau did not give us a philosophy, but a life. He gave us fresh and beautiful literature, he gave us our first and probably only nature classic, he gave us an example of plain living and high think-

ing that is always in season, and he took upon himself that kind of noble poverty that carries the suggestion of wealth of soul.

No matter how much Thoreau abjured our civilization, he certainly made good use of the weapons it gave him. No matter whose lands he squatted on, or whose saw he borrowed, or to whom or what he was indebted for the tools and utensils that made his life at Walden possible, — these things were the mere accidents of his environment, — he left a record of his life and thoughts there which is a precious heritage to his countrymen. The best in his books ranks with the best in the literature of his times. One could wish that he had shown more tolerance for the things other men live for, but this must not make us overlook the value of the things he himself lived for, though with some of his readers his intolerance doubtless has this effect. We cannot all take to the woods and swamps as Thoreau did. He had a genius for that kind of a life; the most of us must stick to our farms and desks and shops and professions.

Thoreau retired to Walden for study and contemplation, and because, as he said, he had a little private business with himself. He found that by working about six weeks in the year he could meet all his living expenses, and then have all his winter and most of his summers free and clear for study. He found that to maintain one's self on this earth

is not a hardship, but a pastime, if one will live simply and wisely. He said, "It is not necessary that a man should earn his living by the sweat of his brow unless he sweats easier than I do." Was not his experiment worth while?

"Walden" is a wonderful and delightful piece of brag, but it is much more than that. It is literature; it is a Gospel of the Wild. It made a small Massachusetts pond famous, and the Mecca of many devout pilgrims.

Lowell says that Thoreau had no humor, but there are many pages in "Walden" that are steeped in a quiet but most delicious humor. His humor brings that inward smile which is the badge of art's felicity. His "Bean-Field" is full of it. I venture to say that never before had a hermit so much fun with a field of white beans.

Both by training and by temperament Lowell was disqualified from entering into Thoreau's character and aims. Lowell's passion for books and academic accomplishments was as strong as was Thoreau's passion for the wild and for the religion of Nature. When Lowell went to Nature for a theme, as in his "Good Word for Winter," his "My Garden Acquaintance," and the "Moosehead Journal," his use of it was mainly to unlock the treasures of his literary and scholarly attainments; he bedecked and bejeweled Nature with gems from all the literatures of the world. In the "Journal"

we get more of the flavor of libraries than of the Maine woods and waters. No reader of Lowell can doubt that he was a nature-lover, nor can he doubt that he loved books and libraries more. In all his nature writings the poverty of the substance and the wealth of the treatment are striking. The final truth about Lowell's contributions is that his mind was essentially a prose mind, even when he writes poetry. Emerson said justly that his tone was always that of prose. What is his "Cathedral" but versified prose? Like so many cultivated men, he showed a talent for poetry, but not genius; as, on the other hand, one may say of Emerson that he showed more genius for poetry than talent, his inspiration surpassed his technical skill.

One is not surprised when he finds that John Brown was one of Thoreau's heroes; he was a sort of John Brown himself in another sphere; but one is surprised when one finds him so heartily approving of Walt Whitman and traveling to Brooklyn to look upon him and hear his voice. He recognized at once the tremendous significance of Whitman and the power of his poetry. He called him the greatest democrat which the world had yet seen. With all his asceticism and his idealism, he was not troubled at all with those things in Whitman that are a stumbling-block to so many persons. Evidently his long intercourse with

Nature had prepared him for the primitive and elemental character of Whitman's work. No doubt also his familiarity with the great poems and sacred books of the East helped him. At any rate, in this respect, his endorsement of Whitman adds greatly to our conception of the mental and spiritual stature of Thoreau.

I can hold my criticism in the back of my head while I say with my forehead that all our other nature writers seem tame and insipid beside Thoreau. He was so much more than a mere student and observer of nature; and it is this surplusage which gives the extra weight and value to his nature writing. He was a critic of life, he was a literary force that made for plain living and high thinking. His nature lore was an aside; he gathered it as the meditative saunterer gathers a leaf, or a flower, or a shell on the beach, while he ponders on higher things. He had other business with the gods of the woods than taking an inventory of their wares. He was a dreamer, an idealist, a fervid ethical teacher, seeking inspiration in the fields and woods. The hound, the turtle-dove, and the bay horse which he said he had lost, and for whose trail he was constantly seeking, typified his interest in wild nature. The natural history in his books is quite secondary. The natural or supernatural history of his own thought absorbed

him more than the exact facts about the wild life around him. He brings us a gospel more than he brings us a history. His science is only the handmaid of his ethics; his wood-lore is the foil of his moral and intellectual teachings. His observations are frequently at fault, or wholly wide of the mark; but the flower or specimen that he brings you always "comes laden with a thought." There is a tang and a pungency to nearly everything he published; the personal quality which flavors it is like the formic acid which the bee infuses into the nectar he gets from the flower, and which makes it honey.

I feel that some such statement about Thoreau should precede or go along with any criticism of him as a writer or as an observer. He was, first and last, a moral force speaking in the terms of the literary naturalist.

Thoreau's prayer in one of his poems — that he might greatly disappoint his friends — seems to have been answered. While his acquaintances went into trade or the professions, he cast about to see what he could do to earn his living and still be true to the call of his genius. In his Journal of 1851 he says: "While formerly I was looking about to see what I could do for a living, some sad experiences in conforming to the wishes of friends being fresh in my mind to tax my ingenuity, I thought often and seriously of picking huckleber-

ries; that surely I could do, and its small profits might suffice, so little capital is required, so little distraction from my wonted thoughts." He could range the hills in summer and still look after the flocks of King Admetus. He also dreamed that he might gather the wild herbs and carry evergreens to such villagers as loved to be reminded of the woods. But he soon learned that trade cursed everything, and that "though you trade in messages from heaven, the whole curse of trade attaches to the business." The nearest his conscience would allow him to approach any kind of trade was to offer himself to his townsmen as a land-surveyor. This would take him to the places where he liked to be; he could still walk in the fields and woods and swamps and earn his living thereby. The chain and compass became him well, quite as well as his bean-field at Walden, and the little money they brought him was not entirely sordid.

In one of his happy moods in "Walden" he sets down in a half-facetious, half-mystical, but wholly delightful way, his various avocations, such as his self-appointment as inspector of snow-storms and rain-storms, and surveyor of forest paths and all across-lot routes, and herdsman of the wild stock of the town. He is never more enjoyable than in such passages. His account of going into business at Walden Pond is in the same

happy vein. As his fellow citizens were slow in offering him any opening in which he could earn a living, he turned to the woods, where he was better known, and determined to go into business at once without waiting to acquire the usual capital. He expected to open trade with the Celestial Empire, and Walden was just the place to start the venture. He thought his strict business habits acquired through years of keeping tab on wild Nature's doings, his winter days spent outside the town, trying to hear what was in the wind, and his early spring mornings before his neighbors were astir to hear the croak of the first frog, all the training necessary to ensure success in business with the Celestial Empire. He admits, it is true, that he never assisted the sun materially in his rising, but doubted not that it was of the last importance only to be present at it. All such fooling as this is truly delightful. When he goes about his sylvan business with his tongue in his cheek and a quizzical, good-humored look upon his face in this way, and advertises the hound, the bay horse, and the turtle-dove he lost so long ago, he is the true Thoreau, and we take him to our hearts.

One also enjoys the way in which he magnifies his petty occupations. His brag over his bean-field is delightful. He makes one want to hoe beans with him:

When my hoe tinkled against the stones, that music echoed to the woods and the sky and was an accompaniment to my labor which yielded an instant and immeasurable crop. It was no longer beans that I hoed, nor I that hoed beans; and I remembered with as much pity as pride, if I remembered at all, my acquaintances who had gone to the city to attend the oratorios. The nighthawk circled overhead in the sunny afternoons — for I sometimes made a day of it — like a mote in the eye, or in heaven's eye, falling from time to time with a swoop and a sound as if the heavens were rent, torn at last to very rags and tatters, and yet a seamless cope remained; small imps that fill the air and lay their eggs on the ground on bare sand or rocks on the top of hills, where few have found them; graceful and slender like ripples caught up from the pond, as leaves are raised by the wind to float in the heavens; such kindredship is in nature. The hawk is aërial brother of the wave which he sails over and surveys, those his perfect air-inflated wings answering to the elemental unfledged pinions of the sea. Or sometimes I watched a pair of hen-hawks circling high in the sky, alternately soaring and descending, approaching and leaving one another, as if they were the embodiment of my own thoughts. Or I was attracted by the passage of wild pigeons from this wood to that, with a slight quivering winnowing sound and carrier haste; or from under a rotten stump my hoe turned up a sluggish portentous and outlandish salamander, a trace of Egypt and the Nile, yet our contemporary. When I paused to lean on my hoe, these sounds and sights I heard and saw anywhere in the row, a part of the inexhaustible entertainment which the country offers.

All this is in his best style. Who, after reading it, does not long for a bean-field? In planting it, too what music attends him!

Near at hand, upon the topmost spray of a birch, sings the brown thrasher — or red mavis, as some love to call him — all the morning, glad of your society, that would find out another farmer's field if yours were not here. While you are planting the seed he cries, — "Drop it, drop it, — cover it up, cover it up, — pull it up, pull it up, pull it up." But this was not corn, and so it was safe from such enemies as he. You may wonder what his rigmarole, his amateur Paganini performances on one string or on twenty, have to do with your planting, and yet prefer it to leached ashes or plaster. It was a cheap sort of top dressing in which I had entire faith.

What lessons he got in botany in the hoeing!

Consider the intimate and curious acquaintance one makes with various kinds of weeds, — it will bear some iteration in the account, for there was no little iteration in the labor, — disturbing their delicate organizations so ruthlessly, and making such invidious distinctions with his hoe, levelling whole ranks of one species, and sedulously cultivating another. That's Roman wormwood, — that's pigweed, — that's sorrel, — that's pipergrass, — have at him, chop him up, turn his roots upward to the sun, don't let him have a fibre in the shade, if you do he'll turn himself t'other side up and be as green as a leek in two days. A long war, not with cranes, but with weeds, those Trojans who had sun and rain and dews on their side. Daily the beans saw me come to their rescue armed with a hoe, and thin the ranks of their enemies, filling up the trenches with weedy dead. Many a lusty crest-waving Hector, that towered a whole foot above his crowding comrades, fell before my weapon and rolled in the dust.

I have occasional visits in the long winter evenings, when the snow falls fast and the wind howls in the wood, from an old settler and original proprietor, who

is reported to have dug Walden Pond, and stoned it, and fringed it with pine woods; who tells me stories of old time and of new eternity; and between us we manage to pass a cheerful evening with social mirth and pleasant views of things, even without apples or cider, — a most wise and humorous friend, whom I love much, who keeps himself more secret than ever did Goffe or Whalley; and though he is thought to be dead, none can show where he is buried. An elderly dame, too, dwells in my neighborhood, invisible to most persons, in whose odorous herb garden I love to stroll sometimes, gathering simples and listening to her fables; for she has a genius of unequalled fertility, and her memory runs back farther than mythology, and she can tell me the original of every fable, and on what fact every one is founded, for the incidents occurred when she was young. A ruddy and lusty old dame, who delights in all weathers and seasons, and is likely to outlive all her children yet.

Thoreau taxed himself to find words and images strong enough to express his aversion to the lives of the men who were "engaged" in the various industrial fields about him. Everywhere in shops and offices and fields it appeared to him that his neighbors were doing penance in a thousand remarkable ways:

What I have heard of Bramins sitting exposed to four fires and looking in the face of the sun; or hanging suspended, with their heads downward, over flames; or looking at the heavens over their shoulders "until it becomes impossible for them to resume their natural position, while from the twist of the neck nothing but liquids can pass into the stomach"; or dwelling, chained for life, at the foot of a tree; or measuring with their bodies, like caterpillars, the breadth of vast empires;

or standing on one leg on the tops of pillars, — even these forms of conscious penance are hardly more incredible and astonishing than the scenes which I daily witness. . . . I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of.

Surely this disciple of the Gospel of the Wild must have disappointed his friends. It was this audacious gift which Thoreau had for making worldly possessions seem ignoble, that gives the tang to many pages of his writings.

Thoreau became a great traveler — in Concord, as he says — and made Walden Pond famous in our literature by spending two or more years in the woods upon its shore, and writing an account of his sojourn there which has become a nature classic. He was a poet-naturalist, as his friend Channing aptly called him, of untiring industry, and the country in a radius of seven or eight miles about Concord was threaded by him in all seasons as probably no other section of New England was ever threaded and scrutinized by any one man. Walking in the fields and woods, and recording what he saw and heard and thought in his Journal, became the business of his life. He went over the same ground endlessly, but always brought back new facts, or new impressions, because he was so sensitive to all the changing features of the day and the season in the landscape about him.

Once he extended his walking as far as Quebec, Canada, and once he took in the whole of Cape Cod; three or four times he made excursions to the Maine woods, the result of which gave the name to one of his most characteristic volumes; but as habitually as the coming of the day was he a walker about Concord, in all seasons, primarily for companionship with untamed Nature, and secondarily as a gleaner in the fields of natural history.

II

Thoreau was not a great philosopher, he was not a great naturalist, he was not a great poet, but as a nature-writer and an original character he is unique in our literature. His philosophy begins and ends with himself, or is entirely subjective, and is frequently fantastic, and nearly always illogical. His poetry is of the oracular kind, and is only now and then worth attention. There are crudities in his writings that make the conscientious literary craftsman shudder; there are mistakes of observation that make the serious naturalist wonder; and there is often an expression of contempt for his fellow countrymen, and the rest of mankind, and their aims in life, that makes the judicious grieve. But at his best there is a gay symbolism, a felicity of description, and a freshness of observation that delight all readers.

As a person he gave himself to others reluctantly; he was, in truth, a recluse. He stood for character more than for intellect, and for intuition more than for reason. He was often contrary and inconsistent. There was more crust than crumb in the loaf he gave us.

He went about the business of living with his head in the clouds, or with an absolute devotion to the ideal that is certainly rare in our literary history. He declared that he aimed to crow like chanticleer in the morning, if only to wake his neighbors up. Much of his writings have this chanticleerian character; they are a call to wake up, to rub the film from one's eyes, and see the real values of life. To this end he prods with paradoxes, he belabors with hyperboles, he teases with irony, he startles with the unexpected. He finds poverty more attractive than riches, solitude more welcome than society, a sphagnum swamp more to be desired than a flowered field.

Thoreau is suggestive of those antibodies which modern science makes so much of. He tends to fortify us against the dry rot of business, the seductions of social pleasures, the pride of wealth and position. He is antitoxic; he is a literary germicide of peculiar power. He is too religious to go to church, too patriotic to pay his taxes, too fervent a humanist to interest himself in the social welfare of his neighborhood.

Thoreau called himself a mystic, and a transcendentalist, and a natural philosopher to boot. But the least of these was the natural philosopher. He did not have the philosophic mind, nor the scientific mind; he did not inquire into the reason of things, nor the meaning of things; in fact, had no disinterested interest in the universe apart from himself. He was too personal and illogical for a philosopher. The scientific interpretation of things did not interest him at all. He was interested in things only so far as they related to Henry Thoreau. He interpreted Nature entirely in the light of his own idiosyncrasies.

Science goes its own way in spite of our likes and dislikes, but Thoreau's likes and dislikes determined everything for him. He was stoical, but not philosophical. His intellect had no free play outside his individual predilection. Truth as philosophers use the term, was not his quest but truth made in Concord.

Thoreau writes that when he was once asked by the Association for the Advancement of Science what branch of science he was especially interested in, he did not reply because he did not want to make himself the laughing-stock of the scientific community, which did not believe in a science which deals with the higher law — his higher law, which bears the stamp of Henry Thoreau.

He was an individualist of the most pronounced

type. The penalty of this type of mind is narrowness; the advantage is the personal flavor imparted to the written page. Thoreau's books contain plenty of the pepper and salt of character and contrariness; even their savor of whim and prejudice adds to their literary tang. When his individualism becomes aggressive egotism, as often happens, it is irritating; but when it gives only that pungent and personal flavor which pervades much of "Walden," it is very welcome.

Thoreau's critics justly aver that he severely arraigns his countrymen because they are not all Thoreaus — that they do not desert their farms and desks and shops and take to the woods. What unmeasured contempt he pours out upon the lives and ambitions of most of them! Need a nature-lover, it is urged, necessarily be a man-hater? Is not man a part of nature? — averaging up quite as good as the total scheme of things out of which he came? Cannot his vices and shortcomings be matched by a thousand cruel and abortive things in the fields and the woods? The fountain cannot rise above its source, and man is as good as is the nature out of which he came, and of which he is a part. Most of Thoreau's harsh judgments upon his neighbors and countrymen are only his extreme individualism gone to seed.

An extremist he always was. Extreme views commended themselves to him because they were

extreme. His aim in writing was usually "to make an extreme statement." He left the middle ground to the school committees and trustees. He had in him the stuff of which martyrs and heroes are made. In John Brown he recognized a kindred soul. But his literary bent led him to take his own revolutionary impulses out in words. The closest he came to imitation of the hero of Harper's Ferry and to defying the Government was on one occasion when he refused to pay his poll-tax and thus got himself locked in jail overnight. It all seems a petty and ignoble ending of his fierce denunciation of politics and government, but it no doubt helped to satisfy his imagination, which so tyrannized over him throughout life. He could endure offenses against his heart and conscience and reason easier than against his imagination.

He presents that curious phenomenon of a man who is an extreme product of culture and civilization, and yet who so hungers and thirsts for the wild and the primitive that he is unfair to the forces and conditions out of which he came, and by which he is at all times nourished and upheld. He made his excursions into the Maine wilderness and lived in his hut by Walden Pond as a scholar and philosopher, and not at all in the spirit of the lumbermen and sportsmen whose wildness he so much admired. It was from his vantage-ground of culture and of Concord transcendentalism that

he appraised all these types. It was from a community built up and sustained by the common industries and the love of gain that he decried all these things. It was from a town and a civilization that owed much to the pine tree that he launched his diatribe against the lumbermen in the Maine woods: "The pine is no more lumber than man is; and to be made into boards and houses no more its true and highest use than the truest use of man is to be cut down and made into manure." Not a happy comparison, but no matter. If the pine tree had not been cut down and made into lumber, it is quite certain that Thoreau would never have got to the Maine woods to utter this protest, just as it is equally certain that had he not been a member of a thrifty and industrious community, and kept his hold upon it, he could not have made his Walden experiment of toying and coquetting with the wild and the non-industrial. His occupations as land-surveyor, lyceum lecturer, and magazine writer attest how much he owed to the civilization he was so fond of decrying. This is Thoreau's weakness — the half-truths in which he plumes himself, as if they were the whole law and gospel. His Walden bean-field was only a pretty piece of play-acting; he cared more for the ringing of his hoe upon the stones than for the beans. Had his living really depended upon the product, the sound would not have pleased him

so, and the botany of the weeds he hoed under would not have so interested him.

Thoreau's half-truths titillate and amuse the mind. We do not nod over his page. We enjoy his art while experiencing an undercurrent of protest against his unfairness. We could have wished him to have shown himself in his writings as somewhat sweeter and more tolerant toward the rest of the world, broader in outlook, and more just and charitable in disposition — more like his great prototype, Emerson, who could do full justice to the wild and the spontaneous without doing an injustice to their opposites; who could see the beauty of the pine tree, yet sing the praises of the pine-tree State House; who could arraign the Government, yet pay his taxes; who could cherish Thoreau, and yet see all his limitations. Emerson affirmed more than he denied, and his charity was as broad as his judgment. He set Thoreau a good example in bragging, but he bragged to a better purpose. He exalted the present moment, the universal fact, the omnipotence of the moral law, the sacredness of private judgment; he pitted the man of to-day against all the saints and heroes of history; and, although he decried traveling, he was yet considerable of a traveler, and never tried to persuade himself that Concord was an epitome of the world. Emerson comes much nearer being a national figure than does Thoreau, and yet Thoreau, by

reason of his very narrowness and perversity, and by his intense local character, united to the penetrating character of his genius, has made an enduring impression upon our literature.

III

THOREAU'S life was a search for the wild. He was the great disciple of the Gospel of Walking. He elevated walking into a religious exercise. One of his most significant and entertaining chapters is on "Walking." No other writer that I recall has set forth the Gospel of Walking so eloquently and so stimulatingly. Thoreau's religion and his philosophy are all in this chapter. It is his most mature, his most complete and comprehensive statement. He says:

> I have met with but one or two persons in the course of my life who understood the art of Walking, that is, of taking walks — who had a genius, so to speak, for *sauntering*, which word is beautifully derived "from idle people who roved about the country, in the Middle Ages, and asked charity, under pretence of going *à la Sainte Terre*," to the Holy Land, till the children exclaimed, "There goes a *Sainte-Terrer*," — a Saunterer, a Holy-Lander. They who never go to the Holy Land in their walks, as they pretend, are indeed mere idlers and vagabonds; but they who do go there are saunterers in the good sense, such as I mean. . . . For every walk is a sort of crusade, preached by some Peter the Hermit in us, to go forth and reconquer this Holy Land from the hands of the Infidels.

Thoreau was the first man in this country, or in any other, so far as I know, who made a religion of walking — the first to announce a Gospel of the Wild. That he went forth into wild nature in much the same spirit that the old hermits went into the desert, and was as devout in his way as they were in theirs, is revealed by numerous passages in his Journal. He would make his life a sacrament; he discarded the old religious terms and ideas, and struck out new ones of his own:

What more glorious condition of being can we imagine than from impure to become pure? May I not forget that I am impure and vicious! May I not cease to love purity! May I go to my slumbers as expecting to arise to a new and more perfect day! May I so live and refine my life as fitting myself for a society ever higher than I actually enjoy!

To watch for and describe all the divine features which I detect in nature! My profession is to be always on the alert to find God in nature, to know his lurking-place, to attend all the oratorios, the operas, in nature.

Ah! I would walk, I would sit, and sleep, with natural piety. What if I could pray aloud or to myself as I went along the brooksides a cheerful prayer like the birds? For joy I could embrace the earth. I shall delight to be buried in it.

I do not deserve anything. I am unworthy the least regard, and yet I am made to rejoice. I am impure and worthless, and yet the world is gilded for my delight and holidays are prepared for me, and my path is strewn with flowers. But I cannot thank the Giver; I cannot even whisper my thanks to the human friends I have.

In the essay on "Walking," Thoreau says that the art of walking "comes only by the grace of God. It requires a direct dispensation from Heaven to become a walker. You must be born into the family of the Walkers." "I think that I cannot preserve my health and spirits, unless I spend four hours a day at least, — it is commonly more than that, — sauntering through the woods and over the hills and fields, absolutely free from all worldly engagements."

Thoreau made good his boast. He was a new kind of walker, a Holy-Lander. His walks yielded him mainly spiritual and ideal results. The fourteen published volumes of his Journal are mainly a record of his mental reactions to the passing seasons and to the landscape he sauntered through. There is a modicum of natural history, but mostly he reaps the intangible harvest of the poet, the saunterer, the mystic, the super-sportsman.

With his usual love of paradox Thoreau says that the fastest way to travel is to go afoot, because, one may add, the walker is constantly arriving at his destination; all places are alike to him, his harvest grows all along the road and beside every path, in every field and wood and on every hilltop.

All of Thoreau's books belong to the literature of Walking, and are as true in spirit in Paris or London as in Concord. His natural history, for

which he had a passion, is the natural history of the walker, not always accurate, as I have pointed out, but always graphic and interesting.

Wordsworth was about the first poet-walker — a man of letters who made a business of walking, and whose study was really the open air. But he was not a Holy-Lander in the Thoreau sense. He did not walk to get away from people as Thoreau did, but to see a greater variety of them, and to gather suggestions for his poems. Not so much the wild as the human and the morally significant were the objects of Wordsworth's quest. He haunted waterfalls and fells and rocky heights and lonely tarns, but he was not averse to footpaths and highways, and the rustic, half-domesticated nature of rural England. He was a nature-lover; he even calls himself a nature-worshiper; and he appears to have walked as many, or more, hours each day, in all seasons, as did Thoreau; but he was hunting for no lost paradise of the wild; nor waging a war against the arts and customs of civilization. Man and life were at the bottom of his interest in Nature.

Wordsworth never knew the wild as we know it in this country — the pitilessly savage and rebellious; and, on the other hand, he never knew the wonderfully delicate and furtive and elusive nature that we know; but he knew the sylvan, the pastoral, the rustic-human, as we cannot know

them. British birds have nothing plaintive in their songs; and British woods and fells but little that is disorderly and cruel in their expression, or violent in their contrasts.

Wordsworth gathered his finest poetic harvest from common nature and common humanity about him — the wayside birds and flowers and waterfalls, and the wayside people. Though he called himself a worshiper of Nature, it was Nature in her half-human moods that he adored — Nature that knows no extremes, and that has long been under the influence of man — a soft, humid, fertile, docile Nature, that suggests a domesticity as old and as permanent as that of cattle and sheep. His poetry reflects these features, reflects the high moral and historic significance of the European landscape, while the poetry of Emerson, and of Thoreau, is born of the wildness and elusiveness of our more capricious and unkempt Nature.

The walker has no axe to grind; he sniffs the air for new adventure; he loiters in old scenes, he gleans in old fields. He only seeks intimacy with Nature to surprise her preoccupied with her own affairs. He seeks her in the woods, the swamps, on the hills, along the streams, by night and by day, in season and out of season. He skims the fields and hillsides as the swallow skims the air, and what he gets is intangible to most persons. He sees much with his eyes, but he sees more with his heart

and imagination. He bathes in Nature as in a sea. He is alert for the beauty that waves in the trees, that ripples in the grass and grain, that flows in the streams, that drifts in the clouds, that sparkles in the dew and rain. The hammer of the geologist, the notebook of the naturalist, the box of the herbalist, the net of the entomologist, are not for him. He drives no sharp bargains with Nature, he reads no sermons in stones, no books in running brooks, but he does see good in everything. The book he reads he reads through all his senses — through his eyes, his ears, his nose, and also through his feet and hands — and its pages are open everywhere; the rocks speak of more than geology to him, the birds of more than ornithology, the flowers of more than botany, the stars of more than astronomy, the wild creatures of more than zoölogy.

The average walker is out for exercise and the exhilarations of the road, he reaps health and strength; but Thoreau evidently impaired his health by his needless exposure and inadequate food. He was a Holy-Lander who falls and dies in the Holy Land. He ridiculed walking for exercise — taking a walk as the sick take medicine; the walk itself was to be the "enterprise and adventure of the day." And "you must walk like a camel, which is said to be the only beast which ruminates while walking."

IV

THOREAU'S friends and neighbors seem to have persuaded themselves that his natural-history lore was infallible, and, moreover, that he possessed some mysterious power over the wild creatures about him that other men did not possess. I recall how Emerson fairly bristled up when on one occasion while in conversation with him I told him I thought Thoreau in his trips to the Maine woods had confounded the hermit thrush with the wood thrush, as the latter was rarely or never found in Maine. As for Thoreau's influence over the wild creatures, Emerson voiced this superstition when he said, "Snakes coiled round his leg, the fishes swam into his hand, and he took them from the water; he pulled the woodchuck out of its hole by the tail, and took the foxes under his protection from the hunters." Of course Thoreau could do nothing with the wild creatures that you or I could not do under the same conditions. A snake will coil around any man's leg if he steps on its tail, but it will not be an embrace of affection; and a fish will swim into his hands under the same conditions that it will into Thoreau's. As for pulling a woodchuck out of its hole by the tail, the only trouble is to get hold of the tail. The 'chuck is pretty careful to keep his tail behind him, but many a farm boy, aided by his dog, has pulled one out of the stone wall by the tail, much against the 'chuck's

will. If Thoreau's friends were to claim that he could carry *Mephitis mephitica* by the tail with impunity, I can say I have done the same thing, and had my photograph taken in the act. The skunk is no respecter of persons, and here again the trouble is to get hold of the tail at the right moment — and, I may add, to let go of it at the right moment.

Thoreau's influence over the wild creatures is what every man possesses who is alike gentle in his approach to them. Bradford Torrey succeeded, after a few experiments, in so dispelling the fears of an incubating red-eyed vireo that she would take insect food from his hand, and I have known several persons to become so familiar with the chickadees that they would feed from the hand, and in some instances even take food from between the lips. If you have a chipmunk for a neighbor, you may soon become on such intimate terms with him that he will search your pockets for nuts and sit on your knee and shoulder and eat them. But why keep alive and circulate as truth these animal legends of the prescientific ages?

Thoreau was not a born naturalist, but a born supernaturalist. He was too intent upon the bird behind the bird always to take careful note of the bird itself. He notes the birds, but not too closely. He was at times a little too careless in this respect to be a safe guide to the bird-student. Even the

saunterer to the Holy Land ought to know the indigo bunting from the black-throated blue warbler, with its languid, midsummery, " Zee, zee, zee-eu."

Many of his most interesting natural-history notes Thoreau got from his farmer friends — Melvin, Minott, Miles, Hubbard, Wheeler. Their eyes were more single to the life around them than were his; none of them had lost a hound, a turtle-dove, and a bay horse, whose trail they were daily in quest of.

A haunter of swamps and river marshes all his life, he had never yet observed how the night bittern made its booming or pumping sound, but accepted the explanation of one of his neighbors that it was produced by the bird thrusting its bill in water, sucking up as much as it could hold, and then pumping it out again with four or five heaves of the neck, throwing the water two or three feet — in fact, turning itself into a veritable pump! I have stood within a few yards of the bird when it made the sound, and seen the convulsive movement of the neck and body, and the lifting of the head as the sound escaped. The bird seems literally to vomit up its notes, but it does not likewise emit water.

Every farmer and fox-hunter would smile if he read Thoreau's statement, made in his paper on the natural history of Massachusetts, that " when

the snow lies light and but five or six inches deep, you may give chase and come up with the fox on foot." Evidently Thoreau had never tried it. With a foot and a half, or two feet of snow on the ground, and traveling on snowshoes, you might force a fox to take to his hole, but you would not come up to him. In four or five feet of soft snow hunters come up with the deer, and ride on their backs for amusement, but I doubt if a red fox ever ventures out in such a depth of snow. In one of his May walks in 1860, Thoreau sees the trail of the musquash in the mud along the river-bottoms, and he is taken by the fancy that, as our roads and city streets often follow the early tracks of the cow, so " rivers in another period follow the trail of the musquash." As if the river was not there before the musquash was!

Again, his mysterious " night warbler," to which he so often alludes, was one of our common every-day birds which most school-children know, namely, the oven-bird, or wood-accentor, yet to Thoreau it was a sort of phantom bird upon which his imagination loved to dwell. Emerson told him he must beware of finding and booking it, lest life should have nothing more to show him. But how such a haunter of woods escaped identifying the bird is a puzzle.

In his walks in the Maine woods Thoreau failed to discriminate the song of the hermit thrush from

that of the wood thrush. The melody, no doubt, went to his heart, and that was enough. Though he sauntered through orchards and rested under apple trees, he never observed that the rings of small holes in the bark were usually made by the yellow-bellied woodpecker, instead of by Downy, and that the bird was not searching for grubs or insects, but was feeding upon the milky cambium layer of the inner bark.

But Thoreau's little slips of the kind I have called attention to count as nothing against the rich harvest of natural-history notes with which his work abounds. He could describe bird-songs and animal behavior and give these things their right emphasis in the life of the landscape as no other New England writer has done. His account of the battle of the ants in Walden atones an hundred-fold for the lapses I have mentioned.

One wonders just what Thoreau means when he says in "Walden," in telling of his visit to "Baker Farm": "Once it chanced that I stood in the very abutment of a rainbow's arch, which filled the lower stratum of the atmosphere, tinging the grass and leaves around, and dazzling me as if I looked through colored crystal." Is it possible, then, to reach the end of the rainbow? Why did he not dig for the pot of gold that is buried there? How he could be aware that he was standing at the foot of one leg of the glowing arch is to me a

mystery. When I see a rainbow, it is always immediately in front of me. I am standing exactly between the highest point of the arch and the sun, and the laws of optics ordain that it can be seen in no other way. You can never see a rainbow at an angle. It always faces you squarely. Hence no two persons see exactly the same bow, because no two persons can occupy exactly the same place at the same time. The bow you see is directed to you alone. Move to the right or the left, and it moves as fast as you do. You cannot flank it or reach its end. It is about the most subtle and significant phenomenon that everyday Nature presents to us. Unapproachable as a spirit, like a visitant from another world, yet the creation of the familiar sun and rain!

How Thoreau found himself standing in the bow's abutment will always remain a puzzle to me. Observers standing on high mountains with the sun low in the west have seen the bow as a complete circle. This one can understand.

We can point many a moral and adorn many a tale with Thoreau's shortcomings and failures in his treatment of nature themes. Channing quotes him as saying that sometimes "you must see with the inside of your eye." I think that Thoreau saw, or tried to see, with the inside of his eye too often. He does not always see correctly, and many times he sees more of Thoreau than he does of the nature

he assumes to be looking at. Truly it is "needless to travel for wonders," but the wonderful is not one with the fantastic or the far-fetched. Forcible expression, as I have said, was his ruling passion as a writer. Only when he is free from its thrall, which in his best moments he surely is, does he write well. When he can forget Thoreau and remember only nature, we get those delightful descriptions and reflections in "Walden." When he goes to the Maine woods or to Cape Cod or to Canada, he leaves all his fantastic rhetoric behind him and gives us sane and refreshing books. In his walks with Channing one suspects he often let himself go to all lengths, did his best to turn the world inside out, as he did at times in his Journals, for his own edification and that of his wondering disciple.

To see analogies and resemblances everywhere is the gift of genius, but to see a resemblance to volcanoes in the hubs or gnarls on birch or beech trees, or cathedral windows in the dead leaves of the andromeda in January, or a suggestion of Teneriffe in a stone-heap, does not indicate genius. To see the great in the little, or the whole of Nature in any of her parts, is the poet's gift, but to ask, after seeing the andropogon grass, "Are there no purple reflections from the culms of thought in my mind?" — a remark which Channing quotes as very significant — is not to be poetical. Thoreau is full

of these impossible and fantastic comparisons, thinking only of striking expressions and not at all about the truth. "The flowing of the sap under the dull rind of the trees" is suggestive, but what suggestion is there in the remark, "May I ever be in as good spirits as a willow"? The mood of the scrub oak was more habitual with him.

Thoreau was in no sense an interpreter of nature; he did not draw out its meanings or seize upon and develop its more significant phases. Seldom does he relate what he sees or thinks to the universal human heart and mind. He has rare power of description, but is very limited in his power to translate the facts and movements of nature into human emotion. His passage on the northern lights, which Channing quotes from the Journals, is a good sample of his failure in this respect:

> Now the fire in the north increases wonderfully, not shooting up so much as creeping along, like a fire on the mountains of the north seen afar in the night. The Hyperborean gods are burning brush, and it spread, and all the hoes in heaven could n't stop it. It spread from west to east over the crescent hill. Like a vast fiery worm it lay across the northern sky, broken into many pieces; and each piece, with rainbow colors skirting it, strove to advance itself toward the east, worm-like, on its own annular muscles. It has spread into their choicest wood-lots. Now it shoots up like a single solitary watch-fire or burning bush, or where it ran up a pine tree like powder, and still it continues to gleam here and there like a fat stump in the burning, and is reflected in the water. And now I see the gods

by great exertions have got it under, and the stars have come out without fear, in peace.

I get no impression of the mysterious almost supernatural character of the aurora from such a description in terms of a burning wood-lot or a hay-stack; it is no more like a conflagration than an apparition is like solid flesh and blood. Its wonderful, I almost said its spiritual, beauty, its sudden vanishings and returnings, its spectral, evanescent character — why, it startles and awes one as if it were the draperies around the throne of the Eternal. And then his mixed metaphor — the Hyperborean gods turned farmers and busy at burning brush, then a fiery worm, and then the burning wood-lots! But this is Thoreau — inspired with the heavenly elixir one moment, and drunk with the brew in his own cellar the next.

V

Thoreau's faults as a writer are as obvious as his merits. Emerson hit upon one of them when he said, "The trick of his rhetoric is soon learned; it consists in substituting for the obvious word and thought, its diametrical antagonist." He praises wild mountains and winter forests for their domestic air, snow and ice for their warmth, and so on. (Yet Emerson in one of his poems makes frost burn and fire freeze.) One frequently comes upon such sentences as these: "If I were sadder, I should

be happier"; "The longer I have forgotten you, the more I remember you." It may give a moment's pleasure when a writer takes two opposites and rubs their ears together in that way, but one may easily get too much of it. Words really mean nothing when used in such a manner. When Emerson told Channing that if he (Emerson) could write as well as he did, he would write a great deal better, one readily sees what he means. And when Thoreau says of one of his callers, "I like his looks and the sound of his silence," the contradiction pleases one. But when he tells his friend that hate is the substratum of his love for him, words seem to have lost their meaning. Now and then he is guilty of sheer bragging, as when he says, "I would not go around the corner to see the world blow up."

He often defies all our sense of fitness and proportion by the degree in which he magnifies the little and belittles the big. He says of the singing of a cricket which he heard under the border of some rock on the hillside one mid-May day, that it "makes the finest singing of birds outward and insignificant." "It is not so wildly melodious, but it is wiser and more mature than that of the wood thrush." His forced and meaningless analogies come out in such a comparison as this: "Most poems, like the fruits, are sweetest toward the blossom end." Which *is* the blossom end of a poem?

Thoreau advised one of his correspondents when he made garden to plant some Giant Regrets — they were good for sauce. It is certain that he himself planted some Giant Exaggerations and had a good yield. His exaggeration was deliberate. "Walden" is from first to last a most delightful sample of his talent. He belittles everything that goes on in the world outside his bean-field. Business, politics, institutions, governments, wars and rumors of wars, were not so much to him as the humming of a mosquito in his hut at Walden: "I am as much affected by the faint hum of a mosquito making its invisible and unimaginable tour through my apartment at earliest dawn, when I was sitting with door and windows open, as I could be by any trumpet that ever sang of fame. It was Homer's requiem; itself an Iliad and Odyssey in the air, singing its own wrath and wanderings. There was something cosmical about it." One wonders what he would have made of a blow-fly buzzing on the pane.

He made Walden Pond famous because he made it the center of the universe and found life rich and full without many of the things that others deem necessary. There is a stream of pilgrims to Walden at all seasons, curious to see where so much came out of so little — where a man had lived who preferred poverty to riches, and solitude to society, who boasted that he could do without the

post office, the newspapers, the telegraph, and who had little use for the railroad, though he thought mankind had become a little more punctual since its invention.

Another conspicuous fault as a writer is his frequent use of false analogies, or his comparison of things which have no ground of relationship, as when he says: "A day passed in the society of those Greek sages, such as described in the Banquet of Xenophon, would not be comparable with the dry wit of decayed cranberry-vines, and the fresh Attic salt of the moss-beds." The word "wit" has no meaning when thus used. Or again where he says: "All great enterprises are self-supporting. The poet, for instance, must sustain his body by his poetry, as a steam planing-mill feeds its boilers with the shavings it makes." Was there ever a more inept and untruthful comparison? To find any ground of comparison between the two things he compared, he must make his poet sustain his body by the scraps and lines of his poem which he rejects, or else the steam planing-mill consume its finished product.

"Let all things give way to the impulse of expression," he says, and he assuredly practiced what he had preached.

One of his tricks of self-justification was to compare himself with inanimate objects, which is usually as inept as to compare colors with sounds

or perfumes: "My acquaintances sometimes imply that I am too cold," he writes, "but each thing is warm enough of its kind. Is the stone too cold which absorbs the heat of the summer sun and does not part with it during the night? Crystals, though they be of ice are not too cold to melt. . . . Crystal does not complain of crystal any more than the dove of its mate."

He strikes the same false note when, in discussing the question of solitude at Walden he compares himself to the wild animals around him, and to inanimate objects, and says he was no more lonely than the loons on the pond, or than Walden itself: "I am no more lonely than a single mullein or dandelion in a pasture, or a bean leaf, or a sorrel, or a house-fly, or a humble-bee. I am no more lonely than the Mill Brook, or a weather-cock, or the North Star, or the South Wind, or an April Shower, or a January Thaw, or the first spider in a new house." Did he imagine that any of these things were ever lonely? Man does get lonely, but Mill Brook and the North Star probably do not.

If he sees anything unusual in nature, like galls on trees and plants, he must needs draw some moral from it, usually at the expense of the truth. For instance, he implies that the beauty of the oak galls is something that was meant to bloom in the flower, that the galls are the scarlet sins of

the tree, the tree's Ode to Dejection, yet he must have known that they are the work of an insect and are as healthy a growth as is the regular leaf. The insect gives the magical touch that transforms the leaf into a nursery for its young. Why deceive ourselves by believing that fiction is more interesting than fact? But Thoreau is full of this sort of thing; he must have his analogy, true or false.

He says that when a certain philosophical neighbor came to visit him in his hut at Walden, their discourse expanded and racked the little house: "I should not dare to say how many pounds' weight there was above the atmospheric pressure on every circular inch; it opened its seams so that they had to be calked with much dulness thereafter to stop the consequent leak — but I had enough of that kind of oakum already picked." At the beginning of the paragraph he says that he and his philosopher sat down each with "some shingles of thoughts well dried," which they whittled, trying their knives and admiring the clear yellowish grain of the pumpkin pine. In a twinkling the three shingles of thought are transformed into fishes of thought in a stream into which the hermit and the philosopher gently and reverently wade, without scaring or disturbing them. Then, presto! the fish become a force, like the pressure of a tornado that nearly wrecks his cabin! Surely

this is tipsy rhetoric, and the work that can stand much of it, as " Walden " does, has a plus vitality that is rarely equaled.

VI

In " Walden " Thoreau, in playfully naming his various occupations, says, " For a long time I was reporter to a journal, of no very wide circulation, whose editor has never yet seen fit to print the bulk of my contributions, and, as is too common with writers, I got only my labor for my pains. However, in this case my pains were their own reward." If he were to come back now, he would, I think, open his eyes in astonishment, perhaps with irritation, to see the whole bulk of them at last in print.

His Journal was the repository of all his writings, and was drawn upon during his lifetime for all the material he printed in books and contributed to the magazines. The fourteen volumes, I venture to say, form a record of the most minute and painstaking details of what one man saw and heard on his walks in field and wood, in a single township, that can be found in any literature.

It seems as though a man who keeps a Journal soon becomes its victim; at least that seems to have been the case with Thoreau. He lived for that Journal, he read for it, he walked for it; it was like a hungry, omnivorous monster that con-

stantly called for more. He transcribed to its pages from the books he read, he filled it with interminable accounts of the commonplace things he saw in his walks, tedious and minute descriptions of everything in wood, field, and swamp. There are whole pages of the Latin names of the common weeds and flowers. Often he could not wait till he got home to write out his notes. He walked by day and night, in cold and heat, in storm and sunshine, all for his Journal. All was fish that came to that net; nothing was too insignificant to go in. He did not stop to make literature of it, or did not try, and it is rarely the raw material of literature. Its human interest is slight, its natural history interest slight also. For upwards of twenty-five years Thoreau seemed to have lived for this Journal. It swelled to many volumes. It is a drag-net that nothing escapes. The general reader reads Thoreau's Journal as he does the book of Nature, just to cull out the significant things here and there. The vast mass of the matter is merely negative, like the things that we disregard in our walk. Here and there we see a flower, or a tree, or a prospect, or a bird, that arrests attention, but how much we pass by or over without giving it a thought! And yet, just as the real nature-lover will scan eagerly the fine print in Nature's book, so will the student and enthusiast of Thoreau welcome all that is recorded in his Journals.

Thoreau says that Channing in their walks together sometimes took out his notebook and tried to write as he did, but all in vain. "He soon puts it up again, or contents himself with scrawling some sketch of the landscape. Observing me still scribbling, he will say that he confines himself to the ideal, purely ideal remarks; he leaves the facts to me. Sometimes, too, he will say, a little petulantly, 'I am universal; I have nothing to do with the particular and definite.'" The truth was Channing had no Journal calling, "More, more!" and was not so inordinately fond of composition. "I, too," says Thoreau, "would fain set down something beside facts. Facts should only be as the frame to my pictures; they should be material to the mythology which I am writing." But only rarely are his facts significant, or capable of an ideal interpretation. Felicitous strokes like that in which he says, "No tree has so fair a bole and so handsome an instep as the birch," are rare.

Thoreau evidently had a certain companionship with his Journal. It was like a home-staying body to whom he told everything on his return from a walk. He loved to write it up. He made notes of his observations as he went along, night or day. One time he forgot his notebook and so substituted a piece of birch-bark. He must bring back something gathered on the spot. He skimmed the

same country over and over; the cream he was after rose every day and all day, and in all seasons.

He evidently loved to see the pages of his Journal sprinkled with the Latin names of the plants and animals that he saw in his walk. A common weed with a long Latin name acquired new dignity. Occasionally he fills whole pages with the scientific names of the common trees and plants. He loved also a sprinkling of Latin quotations and allusions to old and little known authors. The pride of scholarship was strong in him. Suggestions from what we call the heathen world seemed to accord with his Gospel of the Wild.

Thoreau loved to write as well as John Muir loved to talk. It was his ruling passion. He said time never passed so quickly as when he was writing. It seemed as if the clock had been set back. He evidently went to Walden for subject-matter for his pen; and the remarkable thing about it all is that he was always keyed up to the writing pitch. The fever of expression was always upon him. Day and night, winter and summer, it raged in his blood. He paused in his walks and wrote elaborately. The writing of his Journal must have taken as much time as his walking.

Only Thoreau's constant and unquenchable thirst for intellectual activity, and to supply material for that all-devouring Journal, can, to me,

account for his main occupation during the greater part of the last two years of his life, which consisted in traversing the woods and measuring the trees and stumps and counting their rings. Apparently not a stump escaped him — pine, oak, birch, chestnut, maple, old or new, in the pasture or in the woods; he must take its measure and know its age. He must get the girth of every tree he passed and some hint of all the local conditions that had influenced its growth. Over two hundred pages of his Journal are taken up with barren details of this kind. He cross-questions the stumps and trees as if searching for the clue to some important problem, but no such problem is disclosed. He ends where he begins. His vast mass of facts and figures was incapable of being generalized or systematized. His elaborate tables of figures, so carefully arranged, absolutely accurate, no doubt, are void of interest, because no valuable inferences can be drawn from them.

"I have measured in all eight pitch pine stumps at the Tommy Wheeler hollow, sawed off within a foot of the ground. I measured the longest diameter and then at right angles with that, and took the average, and then selected the side of the stump on which the radius was of average length, and counted the number of rings in each inch, beginning at the center, thus:" And then follows a table of figures filling a page. "Of those eight,

average growth about one seventh of an inch per year. Calling the smallest number of rings in an inch in each tree one, the comparative slowness of growth of the inches is thus expressed." Then follows another carefully prepared table of figures. Before one is done with these pages one fairly suspects the writer is mad, the results are so useless, and so utterly fail to add to our knowledge of the woods. Would counting the leaves and branches in the forest, and making a pattern of each, and tabulating the whole mass of figures be any addition to our knowledge? I attribute the whole procedure, as I have said, to his uncontrollable intellectual activity, and the imaginary demands of this Journal, which continued to the end of his life. The very last pages of his Journal, a year previous to his death, are filled with minute accounts of the ordinary behavior of kittens, not one item novel or unusual, or throwing any light on the kitten. But it kept his mind busy, and added a page or two to the Journal.

In his winter walks he usually carried a four-foot stick, marked in inches, and would measure the depth of the snow over large areas, every tenth step, and then construct pages of elaborate tables showing the variations according to locality, and then work out the average — an abnormal craving for exact but useless facts. Thirty-four measurements on Walden disclosed the important fact

that the snow averaged five and one sixth inches deep. He analyzes a pensile nest which he found in the woods — doubtless one of the vireo's — and fills ten pages with a minute description of the different materials which it contained. Then he analyzes a yellow-bird's nest, filling two pages. That Journal shall not go hungry, even if there is nothing to give it but the dry material of a bird's nest.

VII

The craving for literary expression in Thoreau was strong and constant, but, as he confesses, he could not always select a theme. "I am prepared not so much for contemplation as for forceful expression." No matter what the occasion, "forceful expression" was the aim. No meditation, or thinking, but sallies of the mind. All his paradoxes and false analogies and inconsistencies come from this craving for a forceful expression. He apparently brought to bear all the skill he possessed of this kind on all occasions. One must regard him, not as a great thinker, nor as a disinterested seeker after the truth, but as a master in the art of vigorous and picturesque expression. To startle, to wake up, to communicate to his reader a little wholesome shock, is his aim. Not the novelty and freshness of his subject-matter concerns him but the novelty and unhackneyed character of his

literary style. That throughout the years a man should keep up the habit of walking, by night as well as by day, and bring such constant intellectual pressure to bear upon everything he saw, or heard, or felt, is remarkable. No evidence of relaxation, or of abandonment to the mere pleasure of the light and air and of green things growing, or of sauntering without thoughts of his Journal. He is as keyed up and strenuous in his commerce with the Celestial Empire as any tradesman in world goods that ever amassed a fortune. He sometimes wrote as he walked, and expanded and elaborated the same as in his study. On one occasion he dropped his pencil and could not find it, but he managed to complete the record. One night on his way to Conantum he speculates for nearly ten printed pages on the secret of being able to state a fact simply and adequately, or of making one's self the free organ of truth — a subtle and ingenious discussion with the habitual craving for forceful expression. In vain I try to put myself in the place of a man who goes forth into wild nature with malice prepense to give free swing to his passion for forcible expression. I suppose all nature-writers go forth on their walks or strolls to the fields and woods with minds open to all of Nature's genial influences and significant facts and incidents, but rarely, I think, with the strenuousness of Thoreau — grinding the grist as they go along.

Thoreau compares himself to the bee that goes forth in quest of honey for the hive: "How to extract honey from the flower of the world. That is my everyday business. I am as busy as the bee about it. I ramble over all fields on that errand and am never so happy as when I feel myself heavy with honey and wax." To get material for his Journal was as much his business as it was the bee's to get honey for his comb. He apparently did not know that the bee does not get honey nor wax directly from the flowers, but only nectar, or sweet water. The bee, as I have often said, makes the honey and the wax after she gets home to the swarm. She puts the nectar through a process of her own, adds a drop of her own secretion to it, namely, formic acid, the water evaporates, and lo! the tang and pungency of honey!

VIII

THERE can be little doubt that in his practical daily life we may credit Thoreau with the friendliness and neighborliness that his friend Dr. Edward W. Emerson claims for him. In a recent letter to me, Dr. Emerson writes: "He carried the old New England undemonstrativeness very far. He was also, I believe, really shy, prospered only in monologue, except in a walk in the woods with one companion, and his difficulties increased to impossibility in a room full of people." Dr. Emerson ad-

mits that Thoreau is himself to blame for giving his readers the impression that he held his kind in contempt, but says that in reality he had neighborliness, was dutiful to parents and sisters, showed courtesy to women and children and an open, friendly side to many a simple, uncultivated townsman.

This practical helpfulness and friendliness in Thoreau's case seems to go along with the secret contempt he felt and expressed in his Journal toward his fellow townsmen. At one time he was chosen among the selectmen to perambulate the town lines — an old annual custom. One day they perambulated the Lincoln line, the next day the Bedford line, the next day the Carlisle line, and so on, and kept on their rounds for a week. Thoreau felt soiled and humiliated. "A fatal coarseness is the result of mixing in the trivial affairs of men. Though I have been associating even with the select men of this and adjoining towns, I feel inexpressibly begrimed." How fragile his self-respect was! Yet he had friends among the surrounding farmers, whose society and conversation he greatly valued.

That Thoreau gave the impression of being what country folk call a crusty person — curt and forbidding in manner — seems pretty well established. His friend Alcott says he was deficient in the human sentiments. Emerson, who, on the

whole, loved and admired him, says: "Thoreau sometimes appears only as a *gendarme*, good to knock down a cockney with, but without that power to cheer and establish which makes the value of a friend." Again he says: "If I knew only Thoreau, I should think coöperation of good men impossible. Must we always talk for victory, and never once for truth, for comfort, and joy? Centrality he has, and penetration, strong understanding, and the higher gifts, — the insight of the real, or from the real, and the moral rectitude that belongs to it; but all this and all his resources of wit and invention are lost to me, in every experiment, year after year, that I make, to hold intercourse with his mind. Always some weary captious paradox to fight you with, and the time and temper wasted." "It is curious," he again says, "that Thoreau goes to a house to say with little preface what he has just read or observed, delivers it in a lump, is quite inattentive to any comment or thought which any of the company offer on the matter, nay, is merely interrupted by it, and when he has finished his report departs with precipitation."

It is interesting in this connection to put alongside of these rather caustic criticisms a remark in kind recorded by Thoreau in his Journal concerning Emerson: "Talked, or tried to talk, with R. W. E. Lost my time — nay, almost my iden-

tity. He, assuming a false opposition where there was no difference of opinion, talked to the wind — told me what I knew — and I lost my time trying to imagine myself somebody else to oppose him."

Evidently Concord philosophers were not always in concord.

More characteristic of Emerson is the incident Thoreau relates of his driving his own calf, which had just come in with the cows, out of the yard, thinking it belonged to a drove that was then going by. From all accounts Emerson was as slow to recognize his own thoughts when Alcott and Channing aired them before him as he was to recognize his own calf.

"I have got a load of great hardwood stumps," writes Thoreau, and then, as though following out a thought suggested by them, he adds: "For sympathy with my neighbors I might about as well live in China. They are to me barbarians with their committee works and gregariousness."

Probably the stumps were from trees that grew on his neighbors' farms and were a gift to him. Let us hope the farmers did not deliver them to him free of charge. He complained that the thousand and one gentlemen that he met were all alike; he was not cheered by the hope of any rudeness from them: "A cross man, a coarse man, an eccentric man, a silent man who does not drill well — of him there is some hope," he declares.

Herein we get a glimpse of the Thoreau ideal which led his friend Alcott to complain that he lacked the human sentiment. He may or may not have been a "cross man," but he certainly did not "drill well," for which his readers have reason to be thankful. Although Thoreau upholds the cross and the coarse man, one would really like to know with what grace he would have put up with gratuitous discourtesy or insult. I remember an entry in his Journal in which he tells of feeling a little cheapened when a neighbor asked him to take some handbills and leave them at a certain place as he passed on his walk.

A great deal of the piquancy and novelty in Thoreau come from the unexpected turn he gives to things, upsetting all our preconceived notions. His trick of exaggeration he rather brags of: "Expect no trivial truth from me," he says, "unless I am on the witness stand." He even exaggerates his own tendency to exaggeration. It is all a part of his scheme to startle and wake people up. He exaggerates his likes, and he exaggerates his dislikes, and he exaggerates his indifference. It is a way he has of bragging. The moment he puts pen to paper the imp of exaggeration seizes it. He lived to see the beginning of the Civil War, and in a letter to a friend expressed his indifference in regard to Fort Sumter and "Old Abe," and all that, yet Mr. Sanborn says he was as zealous about the

war as any soldier. The John Brown tragedy made him sick, and the war so worked upon his feelings that in his failing state of health he said he could never get well while it lasted. His passion for Nature and the wild carried him to the extent of looking with suspicion, if not with positive dislike, upon all of man's doings and institutions. All civil and political and social organizations received scant justice at his hands. He instantly espoused the cause of John Brown and championed him in the most public manner because he (Brown) defied the iniquitous laws and fell a martyr to the cause of justice and right. If he had lived in our times, one would have expected him, in his letters to friends, to pooh-pooh the World War that has drenched Europe with blood, while in his heart he would probably have been as deeply moved about it as any of us were.

Thoreau must be a stoic, he must be an egotist, he must be illogical, whenever he puts pen to paper. This does not mean that he was a hypocrite, but it means that on his practical human side he did not differ so much from the rest of us, but that in his mental and spiritual life he pursued ideal ends with a seriousness that few of us are equal to. He loved to take an air-line. In his trips about the country to visit distant parts, he usually took the roads and paths or means of conveyance that other persons took, but now and then he would

lay down his ruler on the map, draw a straight line to the point he proposed to visit, and follow that, going through the meadows and gardens and door-yards of the owners of the property in his line of march. There is a tradition that he and Channing once went through a house where the front and back door stood open. In his mental flights and excursions he follows this plan almost entirely; the hard facts and experiences of life trouble him very little. He can always ignore them or sail serenely above them.

How is one to reconcile such an expression as this with what his friends report of his actual life: "My countrymen are to me foreigners. I have but little more sympathy with them than with the mobs of India or China"? Or this about his Concord neighbors, as he looks down upon them from a near-by hill: "On whatever side I look off, I am reminded of the mean and narrow-minded men whom I have lately met there. What can be uglier than a country occupied by grovelling, coarse, and low-minded men? — no scenery can redeem it. Hornets, hyenas, and baboons are not so great a curse to a country as men of a similar character." Tried by his ideal standards, his neighbors and his countrymen generally were, of course, found wanting, yet he went about among them helpful and sympathetic and enjoyed his life to the last gasp. These things reveal to us what

a gulf there may be between a man's actual life and the high altitudes in which he disports himself when he lets go his imagination.

IX

In his paper called "Life without Principle," his radical idealism comes out: To work for money, or for subsistence alone, is life without principle. A man must work for the love of the work. Get a man to work for you who is actuated by love for you or for the work alone. Find some one to beat your rugs and carpets and clean out your well, or weed your onion-patch, who is not influenced by any money consideration. This were ideal, indeed; this suggests paradise. Thoreau probably loved his lecturing, and his surveying, and his magazine writing, and the money these avocations brought him did not seem unworthy, but could the business and industrial world safely adopt that principle?

So far as I understand him, we all live without principle when we do anything that goes against the grain, or for money, or for bread alone. "To have done anything by which you earned money is to have been truly idle or worse." "If you would get money as a writer or lecturer, you must be popular, which is to go down perpendicularly." Yet his neighbor Emerson was in much demand as a lecturer, and earned a good deal of money in

that way. Truly idealists like Thoreau are hard to satisfy. Agassiz said he could not afford to give his time to making money, but how many Agassiz are there in the world at any one time? Such a man as our own Edison is influenced very little by the commercial value of his inventions. This is as it should be, but only a small fraction of mankind do or can live to ideal ends. Those who work for love are certainly the lucky ones, and are exceptionally endowed. It is love of the sport that usually sends one a-fishing or a-hunting, and this gives it the sanction of the Gospel according to Thoreau. Bradford Torrey saw a man sitting on a log down in Florida who told him, when he asked about his occupation, that he had no time to work! It is to be hoped that Thoreau enjoyed his surveying, as he probably did, especially when it took him through sphagnum swamps or scrub-oak thickets or a tangle of briers and thorns. The more difficult the way, the more he could summon his philosophy. "You must get your living by loving." It is a hard saying, but it is a part of his gospel. But as he on one occasion worked seventy-six days surveying, for only one dollar a day, the money he received should not be laid up against him.

As a matter of fact we find Thoreau frequently engaging in manual labor to earn a little money. He relates in his Journal of 1857 that while he was

living in the woods he did various jobs about town —fence-building, painting, gardening, carpentering:

One day a man came from the east edge of the town and said that he wanted to get me to brick up a fireplace, etc., etc., for him. I told him that I was not a mason, but he knew that I had built my own house entirely and would not take no for an answer. So I went.

It was three miles off, and I walked back and forth each day, arriving early and working as late as if I were living there. The man was gone away most of the time, but had left some sand dug up in his cow-yard for me to make mortar with. I bricked up a fireplace, papered a chamber, but my principal work was whitewashing ceilings. Some were so dirty that many coats would not conceal the dirt. In the kitchen I finally resorted to yellow-wash to cover the dirt. I took my meals there, sitting down with my employer (when he got home) and his hired men. I remember the awful condition of the sink, at which I washed one day, and when I came to look at what was called the towel I passed it by and wiped my hands on the air, and thereafter I resorted to the pump. I worked there hard three days, charging only a dollar a day.

About the same time I also contracted to build a wood-shed of no mean size, for, I think, exactly six dollars, and cleared about half of it by a close calculation and swift working. The tenant wanted me to throw in a gutter and latch, but I carried off the board that was left and gave him no latch but a button. It stands yet, — behind the Kettle house. I broke up Johnny Kettle's old "trow," in which he kneaded his bread, for material. Going home with what nails were left in a flower [*sic !*] bucket on my arm, in a rain, I was about getting into a hay-rigging, when my umbrella frightened the horse, and he kicked at me over the fills, smashed the bucket on my arm, and stretched me on my back;

but while I lay on my back, his leg being caught under the shaft, I got up, to see him sprawling on the other side. This accident, the sudden bending of my body backwards, sprained my stomach so that I did not get quite strong there for several years, but had to give up some fence-building and other work which I had undertaken from time to time.

I built the common slat fence for $1.50 per rod, or worked for $1.00 per day. I built six fences.

These homely and laborious occupations show the dreamer and transcendentalist of Walden in a very interesting light. In his practical life he was a ready and resourceful man and could set his neighbors a good example, and no doubt give them good advice. But what fun he had with his correspondents when they wrote him for practical advice about the conduct of their lives! One of them had evidently been vexing his soul over the problem of Church and State: "Why not make a very large mud pie and bake it in the sun? Only put no Church nor State into it, nor upset any other pepper box that way. Dig out a woodchuck — for that has nothing to do with rotting institutions. Go ahead."

Dear, old-fashioned Wilson Flagg, who wrote pleasantly, but rather tamely, about New England birds and seasons, could not profit much from Thoreau's criticism: "He wants stirring up with a pole. He should practice turning a series of summer-sets rapidly, or jump up and see how many

times he can strike his feet together before coming down. Let him make the earth turn round now the other way, and whet his wits on it as on a grindstone; in short, see how many ideas he can entertain at once."

Expect no Poor Richard maxims or counsel from Thoreau. He would tell you to invest your savings in the bonds of the Celestial Empire, or plant your garden with a crop of Giant Regrets. He says these are excellent for sauce. He encourages one of his correspondents with the statement that he "never yet knew the sun to be knocked down and rolled through a mud puddle; he comes out honor bright from behind every storm."

X

All Thoreau's apparent inconsistencies and contradictions come from his radical idealism. In all his judgments upon men and things, and upon himself, he is an uncompromising idealist. All fall short. Add his habit of exaggeration and you have him saying that the pigs in the street in New York (in 1843) are the most respectable part of the population. The pigs, I suppose, lived up to the pig standard, but the people did not live up to the best human standards. Wherever the ideal leads him, there he follows. After his brother John's death he said he did not wish ever to see John

again, but only the ideal John — that other John of whom he was but the imperfect representative. Yet the loss of the real John was a great blow to him, probably the severest in his life. But he never allows himself to go on record as showing any human weakness.

"Comparatively," he says, "we can excuse any offense against the heart, but not against the imagination." Thoreau probably lived in his heart as much as most other persons, but his peculiar gospel is the work of his imagination. He could turn his idealism to practical account. A man who had been camping with him told me that on such expeditions he carried a small piece of cake carefully wrapped up in his pocket and that after he had eaten his dinner he would take a small pinch of this cake. His imagination seemed to do the rest.

The most unpromising subject would often kindle the imagination of Thoreau. His imagination fairly runs riot over poor Bill Wheeler, a cripple and a sot who stumped along on two clumps for feet, and who earned his grog by doing chores here and there. One day Thoreau found him asleep in the woods in a low shelter which consisted of meadow hay cast over a rude frame. It was a rare find to Thoreau. A man who could turn his back upon the town and civilization like that must be some great philosopher, greater than

Socrates or Diogenes, living perhaps "from a deep principle," "simplifying life, returning to nature," having put off many things, — "luxuries, comforts, human society, even his feet, — wrestling with his thoughts." He outdid himself. He out-Thoreaued Thoreau: "Who knows but in his solitary meadow-hay bunk he indulges, in thought, only in triumphant satires on men? [More severe than those of the Walden hermit?] I was not sure for a moment but here was a philosopher who had left far behind him the philosophers of Greece and India, and I envied him his advantageous point of view — " with much more to the same effect.

Thoreau's reaction from the ordinary humdrum, respectable, and comfortable country life was so intense, and his ideal of the free and austere life he would live so vivid, that he could thus see in this besotted vagabond a career and a degree of wisdom that he loved to contemplate.

One catches eagerly at any evidence of tender human emotions in Thoreau, his stoical indifference is so habitual with him: "I laughed at myself the other day to think that I cried while reading a pathetic story." And he excuses himself by saying, "It is not I, but Nature in me, which was stronger than I."

It was hard for Thoreau to get interested in young women. He once went to an evening party

of thirty or forty of them, " in a small room, warm and noisy." He was introduced to two of them, but could not hear what they said, there was such a cackling. He concludes by saying: " The society of young women is the most unprofitable I have ever tried. They are so light and flighty that you can never be sure whether they are there or not."

XI

As a philosopher or expositor and interpreter of a principle, Thoreau is often simply grotesque. His passion for strong and striking figures usually gets the best of him. In discussing the relation that exists between the speaker or lecturer and his audience he says, " The lecturer will read best those parts of his lecture which are best heard," as if the reading did not precede the hearing! Then comes this grotesque analogy: " I saw some men unloading molasses-hogsheads from a truck at a depot the other day, rolling them up an inclined plane. The truckman stood behind and shoved, after putting a couple of ropes, one round each end of the hogshead, while two men standing in the depot steadily pulled at the ropes. The first man was the lecturer, the last was the audience." I suppose the hogshead stands for the big thoughts of the speaker which he cannot manage at all without the active coöperation of the audience. The

truth is, people assemble in a lecture hall in a passive but expectant frame of mind. They are ready to be pleased or displeased. They are there like an instrument to be played upon by the orator. He may work his will with them. Without their sympathy his success will not be great, but the triumph of his art is to win their sympathy. Those who went to scoff when the Great Preacher spoke, remained to pray. No man could speak as eloquently to empty seats, or to a dummy audience, as to a hall filled with intelligent people, yet Thoreau's ropes and hogsheads and pulling and pushing truckmen absurdly misrepresent the true relation that exists between a speaker and his hearers. Of course a speaker finds it uphill work if his audience is not with him, but that it is not with him is usually his own fault.

Thoreau's merits as a man and a writer are so many and so great that I have not hesitated to make much of his defects. Indeed, I have with malice aforethought ransacked his works to find them. But after they are all charged up against him, the balance that remains on the credit side of the account is so great that they do not disturb us.

There has been but one Thoreau, and we should devoutly thank the gods of New England for the precious gift. Thoreau's work lives and will continue to live because, in the first place, the world loves a writer who can flout it and turn his back

upon it and yet make good; and again because the books which he gave to the world have many and very high literary and ethical values. They are fresh, original, and stimulating. He drew a gospel out of the wild; he brought messages from the wood gods to men; he made a lonely pond in Massachusetts a fountain of the purest and most elevating thoughts, and, with his great neighbor Emerson, added new luster to a town over which the muse of our colonial history had long loved to dwell.

IV

A CRITICAL GLANCE INTO DARWIN

I

It is never safe to question Darwin's facts, but it is always safe to question any man's theories. It is with Darwin's theories that I am mainly concerned here. He has already been shorn of his selection doctrines as completely as Samson was shorn of his locks, but there are other phases of his life and teachings that invite discussion.

The study of Darwin's works begets such an affection for the man, for the elements of character displayed on every page, that one is slow in convincing one's self that anything is wrong with his theories. There is danger that one's critical judgment will be blinded by one's partiality for the man.

For the band of brilliant men who surrounded him and championed his doctrines — Spencer, Huxley, Lyall, Hooker, and others — one feels nothing more personal than admiration; unless the eloquent and chivalrous Huxley — the knight in shining armor of the Darwinian theory — inspires a warmer feeling. Darwin himself almost

disarms one by his amazing candor and his utter self-abnegation. The question always paramount in his mind is, What is the truth about this matter? What fact have you got for me, he seems to say, that will upset my conclusion? If you have one, that is just what I am looking for.

Could we have been permitted to gaze upon the earth in the middle geologic period, in Jurassic or Triassic times, we should have seen it teeming with huge, uncouth, gigantic forms of animal life, in the sea, on the land, and in the air, and with many lesser forms, but with no sign of man anywhere; ransack the earth from pole to pole and there was no sign or suggestion, so far as we could have seen, of a human being.

Come down the stream of time several millions of years — to our own geologic age — and we find the earth swarming with the human species like an ant-hill with ants, and with a vast number of forms not found in the Mesozoic era; and the men are doing to a large part of the earth what the ants do to a square rod of its surface. Where did they come from? We cannot, in our day, believe that a hand reached down from heaven, or up from below, and placed them there. There is no alternative but to believe that in some way they arose out of the antecedent animal life of the globe; in other words that man is the result of the process of evolution, and that all other existing forms of life,

vegetable and animal, are a product of the same movement.

To explain how this came about, what factors and forces entered into the transformation, is the task that Darwin set himself. It was a mighty task, and whether or not his solution of the problem stands the test of time, we must yet bow in reverence before one of the greatest of natural philosophers; for even to have conceived this problem thus clearly, and to have placed it in intelligible form before men's minds, is a great achievement.

Darwin was as far from being as sure of the truth of Darwinism as many of his disciples were, and still are. He said in 1860, in a letter to one of his American correspondents, " I have never for a moment doubted that, though I cannot see my errors, much of my book [" The Origin of Species "] will be proved erroneous." Again he said, in 1862, " I look at it as absolutely certain that very much in the ' Origin ' will be proved rubbish; but I expect and hope that the framework will stand."

Its framework is the theory of Evolution, which is very sure to stand. In its inception his theory is half-miracle and half-fact. He assumes that in the beginning (as if there ever was or could be a " beginning," in that sense) God created a few forms, animal and vegetable, and then left it to the gods of Evolution, the chief of which is Natural

Selection, to do the rest. While Darwin would not admit any predetermining factors in Evolution, or that any innate tendency to progressive development existed, he said he could not look upon the world of living things as the result of chance. Yet in fortuitous, or chance, variation he saw one of the chief factors of Evolution.

The world of Chance into which Darwinism delivers us — what can the thoughtful mind make of it?

That life with all its myriad forms is the result of chance is, according to Professor Osborn, a biological dogma. He everywhere uses the word "chance" as opposed to law, or to the sequence of cause and effect. This, it seems to me, is a misuse of the term. Is law, in this sense, ever suspended or annulled? If one chances to fall off his horse or his house, is it not gravity that pulls him down? Are not the laws of energy everywhere operative in all movements of matter in the material world? Chance is not opposed to law, but to design. Anything that befalls us that was not designed is a matter of chance. The fortuitous enters largely into all human life. If I carelessly toss a stone across the road, it is a matter of chance just where it will fall, but its course is not lawless. Does not gravity act upon it? does not the resistance of the air act upon it? does not the muscular force of my arm act upon it? and does not this complex of

physical forces determine the precise spot where the stone shall fall? If, in its fall, it were to hit a bird or a mouse or a flower, that would be a matter of chance, so far as my will was concerned. Is not a meteoric stone falling out of space acted upon by similar forces, which determine where it shall strike the earth? In this case, we must substitute for the energy of my arm the cosmic energy that gives the primal impetus to all heavenly bodies. If the falling aërolite were to hit a person or a house, we should say it was a matter of chance, because it was not planned or designed. But when the shells of the long-range guns hit their invisible target or the bombs from the airplanes hit their marks, chance plays a part, because all the factors that enter into the problem are not and cannot be on the instant accurately measured. The collision of two heavenly bodies in the depth of space, which does happen, is, from our point of view, a matter of chance, although governed by inexorable law.

The forms of inanimate objects — rocks, hills, rivers, lakes — are matters of chance, since they serve no purpose: any other form would be as fit; but the forms of living things are always purposeful. Is it possible to believe that the human body, with all its complicated mechanism, its many wonderful organs of secretion and excretion and assimilation, is any more matter of chance

than a watch or a phonograph is? Though what agent to substitute for the word "chance," I confess I do not know. The short cut to an omnipotent Creator sitting apart from the thing created will not satisfy the naturalist. And to make energy itself creative, as Professor Osborn does, is only to substitute one god for another. I can no more think of the course of organic evolution as being accidental in the Darwinian sense, than I can think of the evolution of the printing-press or the aëroplane as being accidental, although chance has played its part. Can we think of the first little horse of which we have any record, the eohippus of three or four millions of years ago, as evolving by accidental variations into the horse of our time, without presupposing an equine impulse to development? As well might we trust our ships to the winds and waves with the expectation that they will reach their several ports.

Are we to believe that we live in an entirely mechanical and fortuitous world — a world which has no interior, which is only a maze of acting, reacting, and interacting of blind physical forces? According to the chance theory, the struggle of a living body to exist does not differ from the vicissitudes of, say, water seeking an equilibrium, or heat a uniform temperature.

Chance has played an important part in human history, and in all life-history — often, no doubt,

the main part — since history began. It was by chance that Columbus discovered America; he simply blundered upon it. He had set out on his voyage with something quite different in view. But his ship, and the crew, and the voyage itself, were not matters of chance but of purpose.

According to the selectionists' theory, chance gave the bird its wings, the fish its fins, the porcupine its quills, the skunk its fetid secretion, the cuttlefish its ink, the swordfish its sword, the electric eel its powerful battery; it gave the giraffe its long neck, the camel its hump, the horse its hoof, the ruminants their horns and double stomach, and so on. According to Weismann, it gave us our eyes, our ears, our hands with the fingers and opposing thumb, it gave us all the complicated and wonderful organs of our bodies, and all their circulation, respiration, digestion, assimilation, secretion, excretion, reproduction. All we are, or can be, the selectionist credits to Natural Selection.

Try to think of that wonderful organ, the eye, with all its marvelous powers and adaptations, as the result of what we call chance or Natural Selection. Well may Darwin have said that the eye made him shudder when he tried to account for it by Natural Selection. Why, its adaptations in one respect alone, minor though they be, are

enough to stagger any number of selectionists. I refer to the rows of peculiar glands that secrete an oily substance, differing in chemical composition from any other secretion, a secretion which keeps the eyelids from sticking together in sleep. "Behavior as lawless as snowflakes," says Whitman — a phrase which probably stuck to him from Rousseau; but are snowflakes and raindrops lawless? To us creatures of purpose, they are so because the order of their falling is haphazard. They obey their own laws. Again we see chance working inside of law.

When the sower scatters the seed-grains from his hand, he does not and cannot determine the point of soil upon which any of them shall fall, but there is design in his being there and in sowing the seed. Astronomy is an exact science, biology is not. The celestial events always happen on time. The astronomers can tell us to the fraction of a second when the eclipses of the sun and moon and the transit of the inferior planets across the sun's disk will take place. They know and have measured all the forces that bring them about. Now, if we knew with the same mathematical precision all the elements that enter into the complex of forces which shapes our lives, could we forecast the future with the same accuracy with which the astronomers forecast the movements of the orbs? or are there incommensurable factors in life?

II

How are we to reconcile the obvious hit-and-miss method of Nature with the reign of law, or with a world of design? Consider the seeds of a plant or a tree, as sown by the wind. It is a matter of chance where they alight; it is hit or miss with them always. Yet the seeds, say, of the cat-tail flag always find the wet or the marshy places. If they had a topographical map of the country and a hundred eyes they could not succeed better. Of course, there are vastly more failures than successes with them, but one success in ten thousand trials is enough. They go to all points of the compass with the wind, and sooner or later hit the mark. Chance decides where the seed shall fall, but it was not chance that gave wings to this and other seeds. The hooks and wings and springs and parachutes that wind-sown seeds possess are not matters of chance: they all show design. So here is design working in a hit-and-miss world.

There are chance details in any general plan. The general forms which a maple or an oak or an elm takes in the forest or in the field are fixed, but many of the details are quite accidental. All the individual trees of a species have a general resemblance, but one differs from another in the number and exact distribution of the branches, and in many other ways. We cannot solve the fundamental problems of biology by addition and

subtraction. He who sees nothing transcendent and mysterious in the universe does not see deeply; he lacks that vision without which the people perish. All organic and structural changes are adaptive from the first; they do not need natural selection to whip them into shape. All it can do is to serve as a weeding-out process.

Acquired characters are not inherited, but those organic changes which are the result of the indwelling impulse of development are inherited. So dominant and fundamental are the results of this impulse that cross-breeding does not wipe them out.

III

While I cannot believe that we live in a world of chance, any more than Darwin could, yet I feel that I am as free from any teleological taint as he was. The world-old notion of a creator and director, sitting apart from the universe and shaping and controlling all its affairs, a magnified king or emperor, finds no lodgment in my mind. Kings and despots have had their day, both in heaven and on earth. The universe is a democracy. The Whole directs the Whole. Every particle plays its own part, and yet the universe is a unit as much as is the human body, with all its myriad of individual cells, and all its many separate organs functioning in harmony. And the mind I see in nature is just as obvious as the

mind I see in myself, and subject to the same imperfections and limitations.

In following Lamarck I am not disturbed by the bogey of teleology, or the ghost of mysticism. I am persuaded that there is something immanent in the universe, pervading every atom and molecule in it, that knows what it wants — a Cosmic Mind or Intelligence that we must take account of if we would make any headway in trying to understand the world in which we find ourselves.

When we deny God it is always in behalf of some other god. We are compelled to recognize something not ourselves from which we proceed, and in which we live and move and have our being, call it energy, or will, or Jehovah, or Ancient of Days. We cannot deny it because we are a part of it. As well might the fountain deny the sea or the cloud. Each of us is a fraction of the universal Eternal Intelligence. Is it unscientific to believe that our own minds have their counterpart or their origin in the nature of which we form a part? Is our own intelligence all there is of mind-manifestation in the universe? Where did we get this divine gift? Did we take all there was of it? Certainly we did not ourselves invent it. It would require considerable wit to do that. Mind is immanent in nature, but in man alone it becomes self-conscious. Wherever there is adaptation of means to an end, there is mind.

Yet we use the terms "guidance," "predetermination," and so on, at the risk of being misunderstood. All such terms are charged with the meaning that our daily lives impart to them and, when applied to the processes of the Cosmos, are only half-truths. From our experience with objects and forces in this world, the earth ought to rest upon something, and that object upon something, and the moon ought to fall upon the earth, and the earth fall into the sun, and, in fact, the whole sidereal system ought to collapse. But it does not, and will not. As nearly as we can put it into words, the whole visible universe floats in a boundless and fathomless sea of energy; and that is all we know about it.

If chance brought us here and endowed us with our bodies and our minds, and keeps us here, and adapts us to the world in which we live, is not Chance a good enough god for any of us? Or if Natural Selection did it, or orthogenesis or epigenesis, or any other genesis, have we not in any of these found a god equal to the occasion? Darwin goes wrong, if I may be allowed to say so, when he describes or characterizes the activities of Nature in terms of our own activities. Man's selection affords no clue to Nature's selection, and the best to man is not the best to Nature. For instance, she is concerned with color and form only so far as they have survival value. We are concerned more with intrinsic values.

"Man," says Darwin, "selects only for his own good; Nature only for the good of the being which she tends." But Nature's good is of another order than man's: it is the good of all. Nature aims at a general good, man at a particular good to himself. Man waters his garden; Nature sends the rain broadcast upon the just and the unjust, upon the sea as upon the land. Man directs and controls his planting and his harvesting along specific lines: he selects his seed and prepares his soil; Nature has no system in this respect: she trusts her seeds to the winds and the waters, and to beasts and birds, and her harvest rarely fails.

Nature's methods, we say, are blind, haphazard; the wind blows where it listeth, and the seeds fall where the winds and waters carry them; the frosts blight this section and spare that; the rains flood the country in the West and the drought burns up the vegetation in the East. And yet we survive and prosper. Nature averages up well. We see nothing like purpose or will in her total scheme of things, yet inside her hit-and-miss methods, her storms and tornadoes and earthquakes and distempers, we see a fundamental benefaction. If it is not good-will, it amounts to the same thing. Our fathers saw special providences, but we see only unchangeable laws. To compare Nature's selection with man's selection is like arguing from

man's art to Nature's art. Nature has no art, no architecture, no music. Her temples, as the poets tell us, are the woods, her harps the branches of the trees, her minstrels the birds and insects, her gardens the fields and waysides — all safe comparisons for purposes of literature, but not for purposes of science.

Man alone selects, or works by a definite method. Might we not as well say that Nature ploughs and plants and trims and harvests? We pick out our favorites among plants and animals, those that best suit our purpose. We go straight to our object, with as little delay and waste as possible. Not so Nature. Her course is always a roundabout one. Our petty economies are no concern of hers. Our choice selection of rich milkers, prolific poultry, or heavy-fleeced sheep is with her quickly sacrificed for the qualities of strength and cunning and speed, as these alone have survival value. Man wants specific results at once. Nature works slowly to general results. Her army is drilled only in battle. Her tools grow sharper in the using. The strength of her species is the strength of the obstacles they overcome.

What is called Darwinism is entirely an anthropomorphic view of Nature — Nature humanized and doing as man does. What is called Natural Selection is man's selection read into animate nature. We see in nature what we have to call

intelligence — the adaptation of means to ends. We see purpose in all living things, but not in the same sense in non-living things. The purpose is not in the light, but in the eye; in the ear, but not in the sound; in the lungs, and not in the air; in the stomach, and not in the food; in the various organs of the body, and not in the forces that surround and act upon it. We cannot say that the purpose of the clouds is to bring rain, or of the sun to give light and warmth, in the sense that we can say it is the purpose of the eyelid to protect the eye, of the teeth to masticate the food, or of the varnish upon the leaves to protect the leaves.

The world was not made for us, but we are here because the world was made as it is. We are the secondary fact and not the primary. Nature is non-human, non-moral, non-religious, non-scientific, though it is from her that we get our ideas of all these things. All parts and organs of living bodies have, or have had, a purpose. Nature is blind, but she knows what she wants and she gets it. She is blind, I say, because she is all eyes, and sees through the buds of her trees and the rootlets of her plants as well as by the optic nerves in her animals. And, though I believe that the accumulation of variations is the key to new species, yet this accumulation is not based upon outward utility but upon an innate tendency to development — the push of life, or creative evolution, as Bergson

names it; not primarily because the variations are advantages, but because the formation of a new species is such a slow process, stretches over such a period of geologic time, that the slight variations from generation to generation could have no survival value. The primary factor is the inherent tendency to development. The origin of species is on a scale of time of enormous magnitude. What takes place among our domestic animals of a summer day is by no means a safe guide as to what befell their ancestors in the abysses of geologic time. It is true that Nature may be read in the little as well as in the big, — *Natura in minimis existat,* — in the gnat as well as in the elephant; but she cannot be read in our yearly calendars as she can in the calendars of the geologic strata. Species go out and species come in; the book of natural revelation opens and closes at chance places, and rarely do we get a continuous record — in no other case more clearly than in that of the horse.

The horse was a horse, from the first five-toed animal in Eocene times, millions of years ago, through all the intermediate forms of four-toed and three-toed, down to the one-toed superb creature of our own day. Amid all the hazards and delays of that vast stretch of time, one may say, the horse-impulse never faltered. The survival value of the slight gains in size and strength from millennium

to millennium could have played no part. It was the indwelling necessity toward development that determined the issue. This assertion does not deliver us into the hands of teleology, but is based upon the idea that ontogeny and phylogeny are under the same law of growth. In the little eohippus was potentially the horse we know, as surely as the oak is potential in the acorn, or the bird potential in the egg, whatever element of mystery may enter into the problem.

In fields where speed wins, the fleetest are the fittest. In fields where strength wins, the strongest are the fittest. In fields where sense-acuteness wins, the keenest of eye, ears, and nose are the fittest.

When we come to the race of man, the fittest to survive, from our moral and intellectual point of view, is not always the best. The lower orders of humanity are usually better fitted to survive than the higher orders — they are much more prolific and adaptive. The tares are better fitted to survive than the wheat. Every man's hand is against the weeds, and every man's hand gives a lift to the corn and the wheat, but the weeds do not fail. There is nothing like original sin to keep a man or a plant going. Emerson's gardener was probably better fitted to survive than Emerson; Newton's butler than Newton himself.

Most naturalists will side with Darwin in re-

jecting the idea of Asa Gray, that the stream of variation has been guided by a higher power, unless they think of the will of this power as inherent in every molecule of matter; but guidance in the usual theological sense is not to be thought of; the principle of guidance cannot be separated from the thing guided. It recalls a parable of Charles Kingsley's which he related to Huxley. A heathen khan in Tartary was visited by a pair of proselytizing moollahs. The first moollah said, "O Khan, worship my god. He is so wise that he made all things!" Moollah Number Two said, "O Khan, worship my god. He is so wise that he makes all things make themselves!" Number Two won the day.

IV

How often it turns out that a man's minor works outlive his major! This is true in both literature and science, but more often in the former than in the latter. Darwin furnishes a case in the field of science. He evidently looked upon his "Origin of Species" as his great contribution to biological science; but it is highly probable that his "Voyage of the Beagle" will outlast all his other books. The "Voyage" is of perennial interest and finds new readers in each generation. I find myself rereading it every eight or ten years. I have lately read it for the fourth time. It is not an argument or a polemic; it is a personal narrative of a disin-

terested yet keen observer, and is always fresh and satisfying. For the first time we see a comparatively unknown country like South America through the eyes of a born and trained naturalist. It is the one book of his that makes a wide appeal and touches life and nature the most closely.

We may say that Darwin was a Darwinian from the first, — a naturalist and a philosopher combined, — and was predisposed to look at animate nature in the way his works have since made us familiar with.

In his trip on the Beagle he saw from the start with the eyes of a born evolutionist. In South America he saw the fossil remains of the Toxodon, and observed, "How wonderful are the different orders, at the present time so well separated, blended together in the different points of the structure of the Toxodon!" All forms of life attracted him. He looked into the brine-pans of Lymington and found that water with one quarter of a pound of salt to the pint was inhabited, and he was led to say: "Well may we affirm that every part of the world is habitable! Whether lakes of brine or those subterranean ones hidden beneath volcanic mountains, — warm mineral springs, — the wide expanse and depth of the ocean, — the upper regions of the atmosphere, and even the surface of perpetual snow, — all support organic beings."

He studies the parasitical habit of the cuckoo

and hits on an explanation of it. He speculates why the partridges and deer in South America are so tame.

His " Voyage of the Beagle " alone would insure him lasting fame. It is a classic among scientific books of travel. Here is a traveler of a new kind: a natural-history voyager, a man bent on seeing and taking note of everything going on in nature about him, in the non-human, as well as in the human world. The minuteness of his observation and the significance of its subject-matter are a lesson to all observers. Darwin's interests are so varied and genuine. One sees in this volume the seed-bed of much of his subsequent work. He was quite a young man (twenty-four) when he made this voyage; he was ill more than half the time; he was as yet only an observer and appreciator of Nature, quite free from any theories about her ways and methods. He says that this was by far the most important event of his life and determined his whole career. His theory of descent was already latent in his mind, as is evinced by an observation he made about the relationship in South America between the extinct and the living forms. " This relationship," he said, " will, I do not doubt, hereafter throw more light on the appearance of organic beings on our earth, and their disappearance from it, than any other class of facts."

He looked into the muddy waters of the sea off the coast of Chile, and found a curious new form of minute life — microscopic animals that exploded as they swam through the water. In South America he saw an intimate relationship between the extinct species of ant-eaters, armadillos, tapirs, peccaries, guanacos, opossums, and so on, and the living species of these animals; and he adds that the wonderful relationship in the same continent between the dead and the living would doubtless hereafter throw more light on the appearance of organic beings on our earth, and their disappearance from it, than any other class of facts.

His observation of the evidences of the rise and fall of thousands of feet of the earth along the Cordilleras leads him to make this rather startling statement: "Daily it is forced home on the mind of the geologist that nothing, not even the wind that blows, is so unstable as the level of the crust of the earth."

There is now and then a twinkle of humor in Darwin's eyes, as when he says that in the high altitude of the Andes the inhabitants recommend onions for the "puna," or shortness of breath, but that he found nothing so good as fossil shells.

Water boils at such a low temperature in the high Andes that potatoes will not cook if boiled all night. Darwin heard his guides discussing the cause. "They had come to the simple conclusion

that ' the cursed pot ' (which was a new one) did not choose to boil potatoes."

In all Darwin's record we see that the book of nature, which ordinary travelers barely glance at, he opened and carefully perused.

V

Natural Selection turns out to be of only secondary importance. It is not creative, but only confirmative. It is a weeding-out process; it is Nature's way of improving the stock. Its tendency is to make species more and more hardy and virile. The weak and insufficiently endowed among all forms tend to drop out. Life to all creatures is more or less a struggle, a struggle with the environment, with the inorganic forces, — storm, heat, cold, sterile land, and engulfing floods, — and it is a struggle with competing forms for food and shelter and a place in the sun. The strongest, the most amply endowed with what we call vitality or power to live, win. Species have come to be what they are through this process. Immunity from disease comes through this fight for life; and adaptability — through trial and struggle species adapt themselves, as do our own bodies, to new and severe conditions. The naturally weak fall by the wayside as in an army on a forced march.

Every creature becomes the stronger by the opposition it overcomes. Natural Selection gives

speed, where speed is the condition of safety, strength where strength is the condition, keenness and quickness of sense-perception where these are demanded. Natural Selection works upon these attributes and tends to perfect them. Any group of men or beasts or birds brought under any unusual strain from cold, hunger, labor, effort, will undergo a weeding-out process. Populate the land with more animal life than it can support, or with more vegetable forms than it can sustain, and a weeding-out process will begin. A fuller measure of vitality, or a certain hardiness and toughness, will enable some species to hold on longer than others, and, maybe, keep up the fight till the struggle lessens and victory is won.

The flame of life is easily blown out in certain forms, and is very tenacious in others. How unequally the power to resist cold, for instance, seems to be distributed among plants and trees, and probably among animals! One spring an unseasonable cold snap in May (mercury 28) killed or withered about one per cent of the leaves on the lilacs, and one tenth of one per cent of the leaves of our crab-apple tree. In the woods around Slabsides I observed that nearly half the plants of Solomon's-seal (*Polygonatum*) and false Solomon's-seal (*Smilacina*) were withered. The vital power, the power to live, seems stronger in some plants than in others of the same kind. I suppose this

law holds throughout animate nature. When a strain of any kind comes, these weaker ones drop out. In reading the stories of Arctic explorers, I see this process going on among their dog-teams: some have greater power of endurance than others. A few are constantly dropping out or falling by the wayside. With an army on a forced march the same thing happens. In the struggle for existence the weak go to the wall. Of course the struggle among animals is at least a toughening process. It seems as if the old Indian legend, that the strength of the foe overcome passes into the victor, were true. But how a new species could arrive as the result of such struggle is past finding out. Variation with all forms of life is more or less constant, but it is around a given mean. Only those acquired characters are transmitted that arise from the needs of the organism.

A vast number of changes in plants and animals are superficial and in no way vital. It is hard to find two leaves of the same tree that will exactly coincide in all their details; but a difference that was in some way a decided advantage would tend to be inherited and passed along. It is said that the rabbits in Australia have developed a longer and stronger nail on the first toe of each front foot, which aids them in climbing over the wire fences. The aye-aye has a specially adapted finger for extracting insects from their hiding-places. Un-

doubtedly such things are inherited. The snow-shoes of the partridge and rabbit are inherited. The needs of the organism influence structure. The spines in the quills in the tails of woodpeckers, and in the brown creeper, are other cases in point. The nuthatch has no spines on its tail, because it can move in all directions, as well with head down as with head up. I have read of a serpent somewhere that feeds upon eggs. As the serpent has no lips or distendable cheeks, and as its mechanism of deglutition acts very slowly, an egg crushed in the mouth would be mostly spilled. So the eggs are swallowed whole; but in the throat they come in contact with sharp tooth-like spines, which are not teeth, but downward projections from the backbone, and which serve to break the shells of the eggs. Radical or vital variations are rare, and we do not witness them any more than we witness the birth of a new species. And that is all there is to Natural Selection. It is a name for a process of elimination which is constantly going on in animate nature all about us. It is in no sense creative, it originates nothing, but clinches and toughens existing forms.

The mutation theory of De Vries is a much more convincing theory of the origin of species than is Darwin's Natural Selection. If things would only mutate a little oftener! But they seem very reluctant to do so. There does seem to have been some

mutation among plants, — De Vries has discovered several such, — but in animal life where are the mutants? When or where has a new species originated in this way? Surely not during the historic period.

Fluctuations are in all directions around a center — the mean is always returned to; but mutations, or the progressive steps in evolution, are divergent lines away from the center. Fluctuations are superficial and of little significance; but mutations, if they occur, involve deep-seated, fundamental factors, factors more or less responsive to the environment, but not called into being by it. Of the four factors in the Darwinian formula, — variation, heredity, the struggle, and natural selection, — variation is the most negligible; it furnishes an insufficient handle for selection to take hold of. Something more radical must lead the way to new species.

As applied to species, the fittest to survive is a misleading term. All are fit to survive from the fact that they do survive. In a world where, as a rule, the race is to the swift and the battle to the strong, the slow and the frail also survive because they do not come in competition with the swift and the strong. Nature mothers all, and assigns to each its sphere.

The Darwinians are hostile to Lamarck with his inner developing and perfecting principle, and,

by the same token, to Aristotle, who is the father of the theory. They regard organic evolution as a purely mechanical process.

Variation can work only upon a variable tendency — an inherent impulse to development. A rock, a hill, a stream, may change, but it is not variable in the biological sense: it can never become anything but a rock, a hill, a stream; but a flower, an egg, a seed, a plant, a baby, can. What I mean to say is that there must be the primordial tendency to development which Natural Selection is powerless to beget, and which it can only speed up or augment. It cannot give the wing to the seed, or the spring, or the hook; or the feather to the bird; or the scale to the fish; but it can perfect all these things. The fittest of its kind does stand the best chance to survive.

VI

After we have Darwin shorn of his selection theories, what has he left? His significance is not lessened. He is still the most impressive figure in modern biological science. His attitude of mind, the problems he tackled, his methods of work, the nature and scope of his inquiries, together with his candor, and his simplicity and devotion to truth, are a precious heritage to all mankind.

Darwin's work is monumental because he belongs to the class of monumental men. The doc-

trine of evolution as applied to animate nature reached its complete evolution in his mind. He stated the theory in broader and fuller terms than had any man before him; he made it cover the whole stupendous course of evolution. He showed man once for all an integral part of the zoölogic system. He elevated natural history, or biology, to the ranks of the great sciences, a worthy member of the triumvirate — astronomy, geology, biology. He taught us how to cross-question the very gods of life in their council chambers; he showed us what significance attaches to the simplest facts of natural history.

Darwin impresses by his personality not less than by his logic and his vast storehouse of observations. He was a great man before he was a great natural-history philosopher. His patient and painstaking observation is a lesson to all nature students. The minutest facts engaged him. He studies the difference between the stamens of the same plant. He counted nine thousand seeds, one by one, from artificially fertilized pods. Plants from two pollens, he says, grow at different rates. Any difference in the position of the pistil, or in the size and color of the stamens, in individuals of the same species grown together, was of keen interest to him.

The best thing about Darwinism is Darwin — his candor, his patience, his simplicity, his devotion to truth, and his power of observation. This

is about what Professor T. H. Morgan meant when he said: "It is the spirit of Darwinism, not its formulæ, that we proclaim as our best heritage." He gave us a new point of view of the drama of creation; he gave us ideas that are applicable to the whole domain of human activities. It is true, he was not a pioneer in this field: he did not blaze the first trail through this wilderness of biological facts and records; rather was he like a master-engineer who surveys and establishes the great highway. All the world now travels along the course he established and perfected. He made the long road of evolution easy, and he placed upon permanent foundations the doctrine of the animal origin of man. He taught the world to think in terms of evolution, and he pointed the way to a rational explanation of the diversity of living forms.

V

WHAT MAKES A POEM?

Pope said that a middling poet was no poet at all. Middling things in art or in any field of human endeavor do not arouse our enthusiasm, and it is enthusiasm that fans the fires of life. There are all degrees of excellence, but in poetry one is always looking for the best. Pope himself holds a place in English literature which he could not hold had he been only a middling poet. He is not a poet of the highest order certainly, but a poet of the third or fourth order — the poet of the reason, the understanding, but not of the creative imagination. It is wit and not soul that keeps Pope alive.

Nearly every age and land has plenty of middling poets. Probably there were never more of them in the land than there are to-day. Scores of volumes of middling verse are issued from the press every week. The magazines all have middling verse; only at rare intervals do they have something more. The May "Atlantic," for instance, had a poem by a (to me) comparatively new writer, Olive Tilford Dargan, that one would hardly stigmatize as middling poetry. Let the reader judge

for himself. It is called "Spring in the Study." I quote only the second part:

"What is this sudden gayety that shakes the grayest boughs?
A voice is calling fieldward — 'T is time to start the ploughs!
To set the furrows rolling, while all the old crows nod;
And deep as life, the kernel, to cut the golden sod.
The pen — let nations have it; — we 'll plough a while for God.

"When half the things that must be done are greater than our art,
And half the things that must be done are smaller than our heart,
And poorest gifts are dear to burn on altars unrevealed,
Like music comes the summons, the challenge from the weald!
'They tread immortal measures who make a mellow field!'

"The planet 's rather pleasant, alluring in its way;
But let the ploughs be idle and none of us can stay.
Here 's where there is no doubting, no ghosts uncertain stalk,
A-traveling with the plough beam, beneath the sailing hawk,
Cutting the furrow deep and true where Destiny will walk."

Lafcadio Hearn spoke with deep truth when he said that "the measure of a poet is the largeness of thought which he can bring to any subject, however trifling." Certainly Mrs. Dargan brings this largeness of thought to her subject. Has the significance of the plough ever before been so brought out? She makes one feel that there should be a plough among the constellations. What are the chairs and harps and dippers in comparison?

The poetry of mere talent is always middling poetry — "poems distilled from other poems," as Whitman says. The work of a genius is of a different order. Most current verse is merely

sweetened prose put up in verse form. It serves its purpose; the mass of readers like it. Nearly all educated persons can turn it off with little effort. I have done my share of it myself — rhymed natural history, but not poetry. "Waiting" is my nearest approach to a true poem.

Wordsworth quotes Aristotle as saying that poetry is the most philosophical of all writing, and Wordsworth agrees with him. There certainly can be no great poetry without a great philosopher behind it — a man who has thought and felt profoundly upon nature and upon life, as Wordsworth himself surely had. The true poet, like the philosopher, is a searcher after truth, and a searcher at the very heart of things — not cold, objective truth, but truth which is its own testimony, and which is carried alive into the heart by passion. He seeks more than beauty, he seeks the perennial source of beauty. The poet leads man to nature as a mother leads her child there — to instill a love of it into his heart. If a poet adds neither to my knowledge nor to my love, of what use is he? For instance, Poe does not make me know more or love more, but he delights me by his consummate art. Bryant's long poem "The Ages" has little value, mainly because it is charged with no philosophy, and no imaginative emotion. His "Lines to a Waterfowl" will last because of the simple, profound human emotion they awaken.

The poem is marred, however, by the stanza that he tacks on the end, which strikes a note entirely foreign to the true spirit of the poem. You cannot by tacking a moral to a poem give it the philosophical breadth to which I have referred. "Thanatopsis" has a solemn and majestic music, but not the unique excellence of the waterfowl poem. Yet it may be generally said of Bryant that he has a broad human outlook on life and is free from the subtleties and ingenious refinements of many of our younger poets.

I know of only three poets in this century who bring a large measure of thought and emotion to their task. I refer to William Vaughn Moody, to John Russell McCarthy (author of "Out-of-Doors" and "Gods and Devils"), and to Robert Loveman, best known for his felicitous "Rain Song," a poem too well known to be quoted here. Any poet who has ever lived might have been proud to have written that poem. It goes as lightly as thistle-down, yet is freighted with thought. Its philosophy is so sublimated and so natural and easy that we are likely to forget that it has any philosophy at all. The fifty or more stanzas of his "Gates of Silence" are probably far less well known. Let me quote a few of them:

"The races rise and fall,
The nations come and go,
Time tenderly doth cover all
With violets and snow.

"The mortal tide moves on
To some immortal shore,
Past purple peaks of dusk and dawn,
Into the evermore.

. . . . . .

"All the tomes of all the tribes,
All the songs of all the scribes,
All that priest and prophet say,
What is it? and what are they?

"Fancies futile, feeble, vain,
Idle dream-drift of the brain, —
As of old the mystery
Doth encompass you and me.

. . . . . .

"Old and yet young, the jocund Earth
Doth speed among the spheres,
Her children of imperial birth
Are all the golden years.

"The happy orb sweeps on,
Led by some vague unrest,
Some mystic hint of joys unborn
Springing within her breast."

What takes one in "The Gates of Silence," which, of course, means the gates of death, are the large, sweeping views. The poet strides through time and space like a Colossus and

"flings
Out of his spendthrift hands
The whirling worlds like pebbles,
The meshèd stars like sands."

Loveman's stanzas have not the flexibility and freedom of those of Moody and McCarthy, but

they bring in full measure the largeness of thought which a true poem requires.

Some of Moody's poems rank with the best in the literature of his time. He was deeply moved by the part we played in the Spanish-American War. It was a war of shame and plunder from the point of view of many of the noblest and most patriotic men of the country. We freed Cuba from the Spanish yoke and left her free; but we seized the Philippines and subdued the native population by killing a vast number of them — more than half of them, some say. Commercial exploitation inspired our policy. How eloquently Senator Hoar of Massachusetts inveighed against our course! We promised the Filipinos their freedom — a promise we have not yet fulfilled.

Moody's most notable poems are "Gloucester Moors," "An Ode in Time of Hesitation" (inspired by the Shaw Monument in Boston, the work of Saint-Gaudens), "The Brute," "The Daguerreotype," and "On a Soldier Fallen in the Philippines." In this last poem throb and surge the mingled emotions of pride and shame which the best minds in the country felt at the time — shame at our mercenary course, and pride in the fine behavior of our soldiers. It is true we made some pretense of indemnifying Spain by paying her twenty million dollars, which was much like the course of a boy who throws another boy

down and forcibly takes his jack-knife from him, then gives him a few coppers to salve his wounds. I remember giving Moody's poem to Charles Eliot Norton (one of those who opposed the war), shortly after it appeared. He read it aloud with marked emotion. Let me quote two of its stanzas:

"Toll! Let the great bells toll
Till the clashing air is dim.
Did we wrong this parted soul?
We will make it up to him.
Toll! Let him never guess
What work we set him to.
Laurel, laurel, yes;
He did what we bade him do.
Praise, and never a whispered hint but the fight he fought was good;
Never a word that the blood on his sword was his country's own heart's-blood.

"A flag for the soldier's bier
Who dies that his land may live;
O, banners, banners here,
That he doubt not nor misgive!
That he heed not from the tomb
The evil days draw near
When the nation, robed in gloom,
With its faithless past shall strive.
Let him never dream that his bullet's scream went wide of its island mark,
Home to the heart of his darling land where she stumbled and sinned in the dark."

When I say that every true poet must have a philosophy, I do not mean that he must be what is commonly called a philosophical poet; from

such we steer clear. The philosophy in a poem must be like the iron in the blood. It is the iron that gives color and vigor to the blood. Reduce it and we become an anæmic and feeble race. Much of the popular poetry is anæmic in this respect. There is no virile thought in it. All of which amounts to saying that there is always a great nature back of a great poem.

The various forms of verse are skillfully used by an increasing number of educated persons, but the number of true poets is not increasing. Quite the contrary, I fear. The spirit of the times in which we live does not favor meditation and absorption in the basic things out of which great poetry arises. "The world is too much with us." Yet we need not be too much discouraged. England has produced Masefield, and we have produced John Russell McCarthy, who has written the best nature poetry since Emerson. The genius of a race does not repeat. We shall never again produce poets of the type of those that are gone, and we should not want to. All we may hope for is to produce poets as original and characteristic and genuine as those of the past — poets who as truly express the spirit of their time, as the greater poets did of theirs — not Emerson and Whitman over again, but a wide departure from their types.

Speaking of Whitman, may we not affirm that

it is his tremendous and impassioned philosophy suffusing his work, as the blood suffuses the body, that keeps " Leaves of Grass " forever fresh? We do not go to Whitman for pretty flowers of poesy, although they are there, but we go to him for his attitude toward life and the universe, we go to stimulate and fortify our souls — in short, for his cosmic philosophy incarnated in a man.

What largeness of thought Tennyson brings to all his themes! There is plenty of iron in his blood, though it be the blood of generations of culture, and of an overripe civilization. We cannot say as much of Swinburne's poetry or prose. I do not think either will live. Bigness of words, and fluency, and copiousness of verse cannot make up for the want of a sane and rational philosophy. Arnold's poems always have real and tangible subject matter. His " Dover Beach " is a great stroke of poetic genius. Let me return to Poe: what largeness of thought did he bring to his subjects? Emerson spoke of him as " the jingle man," and Poe, in turn, spoke of Emerson with undisguised contempt. Poe's picture indicates a neurotic person. There is power in his eyes, but the shape of his head is abnormal, and a profound melancholy seems to rest on his very soul. What a conjurer he was with words and meters and measures! No substance at all in his " Raven," only shadows — a wonderful dance of shadows, all

tricks of a verbal wizard. "The Bells," a really powerful poem, is his masterpiece, unique in English literature; but it has no intellectual content. Its appeal is to the eye and ear alone. It has a verbal splendor and a mastery over measure and rhythm far beyond anything in Shelley, or in any other poet of his time. It is art glorified; it is full of poetic energy. No wonder foreign critics see in Poe something far beyond that found in any other American, or in any British poet!

Poe set to work to write "The Raven" as deliberately as a mechanic goes to work to make a machine, or an architect to build a house. It was all a matter of calculation with him. He did not believe in long poems, hence decided at the outset that his poem should not be more than one hundred lines in length. Then he asked himself, What is the legitimate end and aim of a poem? and answered emphatically, Beauty. The next point to settle was, What impression must be made to produce that effect? He decided that "melancholy is the most legitimate of all poetic tones." Why joy or gladness, like that of the birds, is not equally legitimate, he does not explain. Then, to give artistic piquancy to the whole, he decided that there must be "some pivot upon which the whole structure might turn." He found that "no one had been so universally employed as the refrain." The burden of the poem should be given by the

refrain, and it should be a monotone, and should have brevity. Then his task was to select a single word that would be in keeping with the melancholy at which he was aiming, and this he found in the word *nevermore*. He next invented a pretext for the frequent but varying use of *nevermore*. This word could not be spoken in the right tone by a human being; it must come from an unreasoning creature, hence the introduction of the raven, an ill-omened bird, in harmony with the main tone of the poem. He then considered what was the most melancholy subject of mankind, and found it was death, and that that melancholy theme was most poetical when allied to beauty. Hence the death of a beautiful woman was unquestionably the most poetic topic in the world. It was equally beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic were those of a bereaved lover. Thus he worked himself up, or rather back, to the climax of the poem, for he wrote the last stanza, in which the climax occurs, first. His own analysis of the poem is like a chemist's analysis of some new compound he has produced; it is full of technical terms and subtle distinctions. Probably no other famous poem was turned out in just that studied and deliberate architectural way — no pretense of inspiration, or of "eyes in fine frenzy rolling": just skilled craftsmanship — only this and nothing more.

Arnold's dictum that poetry is a criticism of life is, in a large and flexible sense, true. The poet does not criticize life as the conscious critic does, but as we unconsciously do in our most exalted moments. Arnold, I believe, did not appreciate Whitman, but one function of the poet upon which Whitman lays emphasis, is criticism of his country and times.

"What is this you bring, my America?
Is it uniform with my country?
Is it not something that has been better done or told before?
Have you not imported this or the spirit of it in some ship?
Is it not a mere tale? a rhyme? a pettiness? — is the good old cause in it?
Has it not dangled long at the heels of the poets, politicians, literates of enemies, lands?
Does it not assume that what is notoriously gone is still here?
Does it answer universal needs? will it improve manners?
Can your performance face the open fields and the seaside?
Will it absorb into me as I absorb food, air, to appear again in my strength, gait, face?
Have real employments contributed to it?
Original makers, not mere amanuenses?"

Speaking of criticism, it occurs to me how important it is that a poet, or any other writer, should be a critic of himself. Wordsworth, who was a really great poet, was great only at rare intervals. His habitual mood was dull and prosy. His sin was that he kept on writing during those moods, grinding out sonnets by the hundred — one hundred and thirty-two ecclesiastical sonnets, and over half as many on liberty, all very dull and wooden. His mill kept on grinding whether it had

any grist of the gods to grind or not. He told Emerson he was never in haste to publish, but he seems to have been in haste to write, and wrote on all occasions, producing much dull and trivial work. We speak of a man's work as being heavy. Let us apply the test literally to Wordsworth and weigh his verse. The complete edition of his poems, edited by Henry Reed and published in Philadelphia in 1851, weighs fifty-five ounces; the selection which Matthew Arnold made from his complete works, and which is supposed to contain all that is worth preserving, weighs ten ounces. The difference represents the dead wood. That Wordsworth was a poor judge of his own work is seen in the remark he made to Emerson that he did not regard his "Tintern Abbey" as highly as some of the sonnets and parts of "The Excursion." I believe the Abbey poem is the one by which he will longest be remembered. "The Excursion" is a long, dull sermon. Its didacticism lies so heavily upon it that it has nearly crushed its poetry — like a stone on a flower.

All poetry is true, but all truth is not poetry. When Burns treats a natural-history theme, as in his verses on the mouse and the daisy, and even on the louse, how much more there is in them than mere natural history! With what a broad and tender philosophy he clothes them! how he identifies himself with the mouse and regards himself

as its fellow mortal! So have Emerson's "Titmouse" and "Humble-Bee" a better excuse for being than their natural history. So have McCarthy's "For a Bunny" and "The Snake," and "To a Worm."

THE SNAKE

Poor unpardonable length,
All belly to the mouth,
Writhe then and wriggle,
If there's joy in it!

My heel, at least, shall spare you.

A little sun on a stone,
A mouse or two,
And all that unreasonable belly
Is happy.

No wonder God wasn't satisfied —
And went on creating.

TO A WORM

Do you know you are green, little worm,
Like the leaf you feed on?
Perhaps it is on account of the birds, who would like to eat you.
But is there any reason why they shouldn't eat you, little worm?

Do you know you are comical, little worm?
How you double yourself up and wave your head,
And then stretch out and double up again,
All after a little food.

Do you know you have a long, strange name, little worm?
I will not tell you what it is.
That is for men of learning.
You — and God — do not care about such things.

You would wave about and double up just as much, and be just as futile, with it as without it.
Why do you crawl about on the top of that post, little worm?
It should have been a tree, eh? with green leaves for eating.
But it isn't, and you have crawled about it all day, looking for a new brown branch, or a green leaf.
Do you know anything about tears, little worm?

Or take McCarthy's lines to the honey bee:

"Poor desolate betrayer of Pan's trust,
Who turned from mating and the sweets thereof,
To make of labor an eternal lust,
And with pale thrift destroy the red of love,
The curse of Pan has sworn your destiny.
Unloving, unbeloved, you go your way
Toiling forever, and unwittingly
You bear love's precious burden every day
From flower to flower (for your blasphemy),
Poor eunuch, making flower lovers gay."

Or this:

GODLINESS

I know a man who says
That he gets godliness out of a book.

He told me this as we sought arbutus
On the April hills —
Little color-poems of God
Lilted to us from the ground,
Lyric blues and whites and pinks.
We climbed great rocks,
Eternally chanting their gray elegies,
And all about, the cadenced hills
Were proud
With the stately green epic of the Almighty.

And then we walked home under the stars,
While he kept telling me about his book
And the godliness in it.

There are many great lyrics in our literature which have no palpable or deducible philosophy; but they are the utterance of deep, serious, imaginative natures, and they reach our minds and hearts. Wordsworth's "Daffodils," his "Cuckoo," his "Skylark," and scores of others, live because they have the freshness and spontaneity of birds and flowers themselves.

Such a poem as Gray's "Elegy" holds its own, and will continue to hold it, because it puts in pleasing verse form the universal human emotion which all persons feel more or less when gazing upon graves.

The intellectual content of Scott's poems is not great but the human and emotional content in them is great. A great minstrel of the border speaks in them. The best that Emerson could say of Scott was that "he is the delight of generous boys," but the spirit of romance offers as legitimate a field for the poet as does the spirit of transcendentalism, though yielding, of course, different human values.

Every poet of a high order has a deep moral nature, and yet the poet is far from being a mere moralist —

> "A reasoning, self-sufficing thing,
> An intellectual all-in-all."

Every true poem is an offering upon the altar of art; it exists to no other end; it teaches as nature

teaches; it is good as nature is good; its art is the art of nature; it brings our spirits in closer and more loving contact with the universe; it is for the edification of the soul.

VI

SHORT STUDIES IN CONTRASTS

THE TRANSIENT AND THE PERMANENT

The clouds are transient, but the sky is permanent. The petals of a flowering plant are transient, the leaves and fruit are less so, and the roots the least transient of all. The dew on the grass is transient, as is the frost of an autumn morning. The snows and the rains abide longer. The splendors of summer and sunrise and sunset soon pass, but the glory of the day lasts. The rainbow vanishes in a few moments, but the prismatic effect of the drops of rain is a law of optics. Colors fade while texture is unimpaired.

Of course change marks everything, living or dead. Even the pole star in astronomic time will vanish. But consider things mundane only. How the rocks on the seacoast seem to defy and withstand the waves that beat against them! "Weak as is a breaking wave" is a line of Wordsworth's. Yet the waves remain after the rocks are gone. The sea knows no change as the land does. It and the sky are the two unchanging earth features.

In our own lives how transient are our moments of inspiration, our morning joy, our ecstasies of the spirit! Upon how much in the world of art, literature, invention, modes, may be written the word "perishable"! "All flesh is grass," says the old Book. Individuals, species, races, pass. Life alone remains and is immortal.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE

Positive and negative go hand in hand through the world. Victory and defeat, hope and despair, pleasure and pain. Man is positive, woman is negative in comparison. The day is positive, the night is negative. But it is a pleasure to remember that it is always day in the universe.

The shadow of the earth does not extend very far, nor the shadow of any other planet. Day is the great cosmic fact. The masses of men are negative to the few master and compelling minds. Cold is negative, heat is positive, though the difference is only one of degree. The negative side of life, the side of meditation, reflection, and reverie, is no less important than the side of action and performance. Youth is positive, age is negative. Age says No where it used to say Yes. It takes in sail. Life's hurry and heat are over, the judgment is calm, the passions subdued, the stress of effort relaxed. Our temper is less aggressive, events seem less imminent.

The morning is positive; in the evening we muse and dream and take our ease, we see our friends, we unstring the bow, we indulge our social instincts.

Optimism is positive, pessimism is negative. Fear, suspicion, distrust — are all negative.

On the seashore where I write [1] I see the ebbing tide, the exposed sand and rocks, the receding waves; and I know the sea is showing us its negative side; there is a lull in the battle. But wait a little and the mad assault of the waves upon the land will be renewed.

PALM AND FIST

The palm is for friendship, hospitality, and good will; the fist is to smite the enemies of truth and justice.

How many men are like the clenched fist — pugnacious, disputatious, quarrelsome, always spoiling for a fight; a verbal fisticuff, if not a physical one, is their delight. Others are more conciliatory and peace-loving, not forgetting that a soft answer turneth away wrath. Roosevelt was the man of the clenched fist; not one to stir up strife, but a merciless hitter in what he believed a just cause. He always had the fighting edge, yet could be as tender and sympathetic as any one. This latter side of him is clearly shown in his recently published "Letters to His Children." Lincoln

[1] La Jolla, California.

was, in contrast, the man with the open palm, tempering justice with kindness, and punishment with leniency. His War Secretary, Stanton, wielded the hard fist.

PRAISE AND FLATTERY

"More men know how to flatter," said Wendell Phillips, "than how to praise." To flatter is easy, to condemn is easy, but to praise judiciously and discriminatingly is not easy. Extravagant praise defeats itself, as does extravagant blame. A man is rarely overpraised during his own time by his own people. If he is an original, forceful character, he is much more likely to be overblamed than overpraised. He disturbs old ways and institutions. We require an exalted point of view to take in a great character, as we do to take in a great mountain.

We are likely to overpraise and overblame our presidents. Lincoln was greatly overblamed in his day, but we have made it up to his memory. President Wilson won the applause of both political parties during his first term, but how overwhelmingly did the tide turn against him before the end of his second term! All his high and heroic service (almost his martyrdom) in the cause of peace, and for the league to prevent war, were forgotten in a mad rush of the populace to the other extreme. But Wilson will assuredly come

to his own in time, and take his place among the great presidents.

A little of the Scottish moderation is not so bad; it is always safe. A wise man will always prefer unjust blame to fulsome praise. Extremes in the estimation of a sound character are bound sooner or later to correct themselves. Wendell Phillips himself got more than his share of blame during the antislavery days, but the praise came in due time.

GENIUS AND TALENT

The difference between the two is seen in nothing more clearly than in the fact that so many educated persons can and do write fairly good verse, in fact, write most of the popular newspaper and magazine poetry, while only those who have a genius for poetry write real poems. Could mere talent have written Bryant's lines "To a Waterfowl"? or his "Thanatopsis"? or "June"? Or the small volume of selections of great poetry which Arnold made from the massive works of Wordsworth?

Talent could have produced a vast deal of Wordsworth's work — all the "Ecclesiastical Sonnets" and much of "The Excursion." Could talent have written Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass"? It could have produced all that Whitman wrote before that time — all his stories and poems. Give talent inspiration and it becomes

genius. The grub is metamorphosed into the butterfly.

"To do what is impossible to Talent is the mark of Genius," says Amiel.

Talent may judge, Genius creates. Talent keeps the rules, Genius knows when to break them.

"You may know Genius," says the ironical Swift, "by this sign: All the dunces are against him."

There is fine talent in Everett's oration at Gettysburg, but what a different quality spoke in Lincoln's brief but immortal utterance on the same occasion! Is anything more than bright, alert talent shown in the mass of Lowell's work, save perhaps in his "Biglow Papers"? If he had a genius for poetry, though he wrote much, I cannot see it. His tone, as Emerson said, is always that of prose. The "Cathedral" is a *tour de force*. The line of his so often quoted — "What is so rare as a day in June?" — is a line of prose.

The lines "To a Honey Bee" by John Russell McCarthy are the true gold of poetry. "To make of labor an eternal lust" could never have been struck off by mere talent.

INVENTION AND DISCOVERY

Columbus discovered America; Edison invented the phonograph, the incandescent light, and many other things. If Columbus had not discovered

America, some other voyager would have. If Harvey had not discovered the circulation of the blood, some one else would have. The wonder is that it was not discovered ages before. So far as I know, no one has yet discovered the function of the spleen, but doubtless in time some one will. It is only comparatively recently that the functions of other ductless glands have been discovered. What did we know about the thyroid gland a half-century ago? All the new discoveries in the heavens waited upon the new astronomic methods, and the end is not yet. Many things in nature are still like an unexplored land. New remedies for the ills of the human body doubtless remain to be found. In the mechanical world probably no new principle remains to be discovered. "Keely" frauds have had their day. In the chemical world, the list of primary elements will probably not be added to, though new combinations of these elements may be almost endless. In the biological world, new species of insects, birds, and mammals doubtless remain to be discovered. Our knowledge of the natural history of the globe is far from being complete.

But in regard to inventions the case is different. I find myself speculating on such a question as this: If Edison had never been born, should we ever have had the phonograph, or the incandescent light? If Graham Bell had died in infancy,

should we ever have had the telephone? Or without Marconi should we have had the wireless, or without Morse, the telegraph? Or, to go back still farther, without Franklin should we ever have known the identity of lightning and electricity? Who taught us how to control electricity and make it do our work? One of the questions of Job was, "Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are?" Yes, we can. "We are ready to do your bidding," they seem to say, "to run your errands, to carry your burdens, to grind your grist, to light your houses, to destroy your enemies."

The new inventions that the future holds for us wait upon the new man. The discovery of radium — what a secret that was! But in all probability had not Curie and his wife discovered it, some other investigator would.

Shall we ever learn how to use the atomic energy that is locked up in matter? Or how to use the uniform temperature of the globe? Or the secret of the glow-worm and firefly — light without heat?

The laws of the conservation of energy and of the correlation of forces were discoveries. The art of aviation was both an invention and a discovery. The soaring hawks and eagles we have always been familiar with; the Wright brothers invented the machine that could do the trick.

"Necessity is the mother of invention." As our wants increase, new devices to meet them appear. How the diving-bell answered a real need! The motor-car also, and the flying-machine. The sewing-machine is a great time-saver; the little hooks in our shoes in place of eyelets are great time-savers; pins, and friction matches, and rubber overshoes, and scores on scores of other inventions answer to real needs. Necessity did not call the phonograph into being, nor the incandescent light, but the high explosives, dynamite and T. N. T. (trinitrotoluol) met real wants.

The Great War with its submarines stimulated inventors to devise weapons to cope with them. Always as man's hand and eyes and ears have needed reënforcing or extending, his wit has come to his rescue. In fact, his progress has been contingent upon this very fact. His necessities and his power of invention react upon one another; the more he invents, the more he wants, and the more he wants, the more he invents.

TOWN AND COUNTRY

I WAS saying to myself, Why do not all literary men go to the country to do their work, where they can have health, peace, and solitude? Then it occurred to me that there are many men of many minds, and that many need to be in the thick of life; they get more stimulus out of people than out

of nature. The novelist especially needs to be in touch with multitudes of men and women. But the poet and the philosopher will usually prosper better in the country. A man like myself, who is an observer and of a meditative cast, does better in the country. Emerson, though city born and bred, finally settled in the country. Whitman, on the other hand, loved "populous pavements." But he was at home anywhere under the stars. He had no study, no library, no club, other than the street, the beach, the hilltop, and the marts of men. Mr. Howells was country-born, but came to the city for employment and remained there. Does not one wish that he had gone back to his Ohio boyhood home? It was easy for me to go back because I came of generations of farmer folk. The love of the red soil was in my blood. My native hills looked like the faces of my father and mother. I could never permanently separate myself from them. I have always had a kind of chronic homesickness. Two or three times a year I must revisit the old scenes. I have had a land-surveyor make a map of the home farm, and I have sketched in and colored all the different fields as I knew them in my youth. I keep the map hung up in my room here in California, and when I want to go home, I look at this map. I do not see the paper. I see fields and woods and stone walls and paths and roads and grazing cattle. In this field

I used to help make hay; in this one I wore my fingers sore picking up stones for these stone walls; in this I planted corn and potatoes with my brothers. In these maple woods I helped make sugar in the spring; in these I killed my first ruffed grouse. In this field I did my first ploughing, with thoughts of an academy in a neighboring town at the end of every furrow. In this one I burned the dry and decayed stumps in the April days, with my younger brother, and a spark set his cap on fire. In this orchard I helped gather the apples in October. In this barn we husked the corn in the November nights. In this one Father sheared the sheep, and Mother picked the geese. My paternal grandfather cleared these fields and planted this orchard. I recall the hired man who worked for us during my time, and every dog my father had, and my adventures with them, hunting woodchucks and coons. All these things and memories have been valuable assets in my life. But it is well that not all men have my strong local attachments. The new countries would never get settled. My forefathers would never have left Connecticut for the wilderness of the Catskills.

As a rule, however, we are a drifting, cosmopolitan people. We are easily transplanted; we do not strike our roots down into the geology of long-gone time.

I often wonder how so many people of the Old

World can pull themselves up and migrate to America and never return. The Scots, certainly a home-loving race, do it, and do not seem to suffer from homesickness.

VII

DAY BY DAY

We often hear it said of a man that he was born too early, or too late, but is it ever true? If he is behind his times, would he not have been behind at whatever period he had been born? If he is ahead of his times, is not the same thing true? In the vegetable world the early flowers and fruit blossoms are often cut off by the frost, but not so in the world of man. Babies are in order at any time. Is a poet, or a philosopher, ever born too late? or too early? If Emerson had been born a century earlier, his heterodoxy would have stood in his way; but in that case he would not have been a heretic. Whitman would have had to wait for a hearing at whatever period he was born. He said he was willing to wait for the growth of the taste for himself, and it finally came. Emerson's first thin volume called "Nature" did not sell the first edition of five hundred copies in ten years, but would it have been different at any other time? A piece of true literature is not superseded. The fame of man may rise and fall, but it lasts. Was Watt too early with his steam-engine, or Morse

too early with his telegraph? Or Bell too early with his telephone? Or Edison with his phonograph or his incandescent light? Or the Wright brothers with their flying-machine? Or Henry Ford with his motor-car? Before gasolene was discovered they would have been too early, but then their inventions would not have materialized.

The world moves, and great men are the springs of progress. But no man is born too soon or too late.

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A fadeless flower is no flower at all. How Nature ever came to produce one is a wonder. Would not paper flowers do as well?

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The most memorable days in our lives are the days when we meet a great man.

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How stealthy and silent a thing is that terrible power which we have under control in our homes, yet which shakes the heavens in thunder! It comes and goes as silently as a spirit. In fact, it is nearer a spirit than anything else known to us. We touch a button and here it is, like an errand-boy who appears with his cap in his hand and meekly asks, "What will you have?"

∴

A few days ago I was writing of meteoric men. But are we not all like meteors that cut across the

sky and are quickly swallowed up by the darkness — some of us leaving a trail that lasts a little longer than others, but all gone in a breath?

Our great pulpit orator Beecher, how little he left that cold print does not kill! As a young man I used nearly to run my legs off to get to Plymouth Church before the doors were closed. Under his trumpet-like voice I was like a reed bent by the wind, but now when in a book made up of quotations I see passages from his sermons, they seem thin and flimsy. Beecher's oratory was all for the ear and not for the eye and mind. In truth, is the world indebted to the pulpit for much good literature? Robertson's sermons can be read in the library, and there are others of the great English divines. But oratory is action and passion. "Great volumes of animal heat," Emerson names as one of the qualities of the orator.

The speeches of Wendell Phillips will bear print because his oratory was of the quiet, conversational kind. Webster's, of course, stand the test of print, but do Clay's or Calhoun's? In our time oratory, as such, has about gone out. Rarely now do we hear the eagle scream in Congress or on the platform. Men aim to speak earnestly and convincingly, but not oratorically. President Wilson is a very convincing speaker, but he indulges in no oratory. The one who makes a great effort to be eloquent always fails. Noise and fury and over-

emphasis are not eloquent. "True eloquence," says Pascal, "scorns eloquence."

There is no moral law in nature, but there is that out of which the moral law arose. There is no answer to prayer in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, except in so far as the attitude of sincere prayer is a prophecy of the good it pleads for. Prayer for peace of mind, for charity, for gratitude, for light, for courage, is answered in the sincere asking. Prayer for material good is often prayer against wind and tide, but wind and tide obey those who can rule them.

Our ethical standards injected into world-history lead to confusion and contradiction. Introduced into the jungle, they would put an end to life there; introduced into the sea, they would put an end to life there; the rule that it is more blessed to give than to receive would put an end to all competitive business. Our ethical standards are narrow, artificial, and apply only to civilized communities. Nations have rarely observed them till the present day.

∴

If the world is any better for my having lived in it, it is because I have pointed the way to a sane and happy life on terms within reach of all, in my love and joyous acceptance of the works of Nature about me. I have not tried, as the phrase is, to lead my readers from Nature up to Nature's God,

because I cannot separate the one from the other. If your heart warms toward the visible creation, and toward your fellow men, you have the root of the matter in you. The power we call God does not sustain a mechanical or secondary relation to the universe, but is vital in it, or one with it. To give this power human lineaments and attributes, as our fathers did, only limits and belittles it. And to talk of leading from Nature up to Nature's God is to miss the God that throbs in every spear of grass and vibrates in the wing of every insect that hums. The Infinite is immanent in this universe.

∴

"The faith that truth exists" is the way that William James begins one of his sentences. Of course truth exists where the mind of man exists. A new man and there is new truth. Truth, in this sense, is a way of looking at things that is agreeable, or that gives satisfaction to the human mind. Truth is not a definite fixed quantity, like the gold or silver of a country. It is no more a fixed quantity than is beauty. It is an experience of the human mind. Beauty and truth are what we make them. We say the world is full of beauty. What we mean is that the world is full of things that give us the pleasure, or awaken in us the sentiment which we call by that name.

The broadest truths are born of the broadest

minds. Narrow minds are so named from their narrow views of things.

Pilate's question, "What is Truth?" sets the whole world by the ears. The question of right and wrong is another thing. Such questions refer to action and the conduct of our lives. In religion, in politics, in economics, in sociology, what is truth to one man may be error to another. We may adopt a course of action because it seems the more expedient. Debatable questions have two sides to them. In the moral realm that is true which is agreeable to the largest number of competent judges. A mind that could see further and deeper might reverse all our verdicts. To be right on any question in the moral realm is to be in accord with that which makes for the greatest good to the greatest number. In our Civil War the South believed itself right in seceding from the Union; the North, in fighting to preserve the Union. Both sections now see that the North had the larger right. The South was sectional, the North national. Each of the great political parties thinks it has a monopoly of the truth, but the truth usually lies midway between them. Questions of right and wrong do not necessarily mean questions of true and false. "There is nothing either good or bad," says Hamlet, "but thinking makes it so." This may be good Christian Science doctrine, but it is doubtful philosophy.

∴

Yesterday, as I stood on the hill above Slabsides and looked over the landscape dotted with farms just greening in the April sun, the thought struck me afresh that all this soil, all the fertile fields, all these leagues on leagues of sloping valleys and rolling hills came from the decay of the rocks, and that the chief agent in bringing about this decay and degradation was the gentle rain from heaven — that without the rain through the past geologic ages, the scene I looked upon would have been only one wild welter of broken or crumpled rocky strata, not a green thing, not a living thing, should I have seen.

In the Hawaiian Islands one may have proof of this before his eyes. On one end of the island of Maui, the rainfall is very great, and its deep valleys and high sharp ridges are clothed with tropical verdure, while on the other end, barely ten miles away, rain never falls, and the barren, rocky desolation which the scene presents I can never forget. No rain, no soil; no soil, no life.

We are, therefore, children of the rocks; the rocks are our mother, and the rains our father.

∴

When the stream of life, through some favoring condition, breaks through its natural checks and bounds, and inundates and destroys whole provinces of other forms, as when the locusts, the

forest-worms, the boll-weevil, the currant-worm, the potato beetle, unduly multiply and devastate fields and forests and the farmer's crops, what do we witness but Nature's sheer excess and intemperance? Life as we usually see it is the result of a complex system of checks and counter-checks. The carnivorous animals are a check on the herbivorous; the hawks and owls are a check on the birds and fowls; the cats and weasels are a check on the small rodents, which are very prolific. The different species of plants and trees are a check upon one another.

∴

I think the main reason of the abundance of wealth in the country is that every man, equipped as he is with so many modern scientific appliances and tools, is multiplied four or five times. He is equal to that number of men in his capacity to do things as compared with the men of fifty or seventy years ago. The farmer, with his mowing-machine, his horse-rake, his automobile, his tractor engine and gang ploughs or his sulky ploughs, his hay-loader, his corn-planter, and so on, does the work of many men. Machinery takes the place of men. Gasolene and kerosene oil give man a great advantage. Dynamite, too, — what a giant that is in his service! The higher cost of living does not offset this advantage.

The condition in Europe at this time is quite

different: there the energies of men have been directed not to the accumulation of wealth, but to the destruction of wealth. Hence, while the war has enriched us, it has impoverished Europe.

∴

Why are women given so much more to ornaments and superfluities in dress and finery than men? In the animal kingdom below man, save in a few instances, it is the male that wears the showy decorations. The male birds have the bright plumes; the male sheep have the big horns; the stag has the antlers; the male lion has the heavy mane; the male firefly has wings and carries the lamp. With the barnyard fowl the male has the long spurs and the showy comb and wattles. In the crow tribe, the male cannot be distinguished from the female, nor among the flycatchers, nor among the snipes and plovers. But when we come to the human species, and especially among the white races, the female fairly runs riot in ornamentation. If it is not to attract the male, what is it for? It has been pretty clearly shown that what Darwin calls "sexual selection" plays no part. Woman wishes to excite the passion of love. She has an instinct for motherhood; the perpetuity of the species is at the bottom of it all. Woman knows how to make her dress alluring, how to make it provocative, how much to reveal, how much to conceal. A certain voluptuousness is the ambition

of all women; anything but to be skinny and raw-boned. She does not want to be muscular and flat-chested, nor, on the other hand, to be over-stout, but she prays for the flowing lines and the plumpness that belong to youth. A lean man does not repel her, nor a rugged, bony frame. Woman's garments are of a different texture and on a different scale than those of man, and much more hampering. Her ruffles and ribbons and laces all play their part. Her stockings even are a vital problem, more important than her religion. We do not care where she worships if her dress is attractive. Emerson reports that a lady said to him that a sense of being well-dressed at church gave a satisfaction which religion could not give.

With man the male defends and safeguards the female. True that among savage tribes he makes a slave of her, but in the white races he will defend her with his life. She does not take up arms, she does not go to sea. She does not work in mines, or as a rule engage in the rough work of the world. In Europe she works in the field, and we have had farmerettes in this country, but I know of no feminine engineers or carpenters or stone masons. There have been a few women explorers and Alpine climbers, and investigators in science, but only a few. The discovery of radium is chiefly accredited to a woman, and women have a few valuable inventions to their credit. I

saw a valuable and ingenious machine, in a great automobile factory, that was invented by a woman. Now that woman has won the franchise in this country, we are waiting to see if politics will be purified.

The "weaker sex," surely. How much easier do women cry than men! how much more easily are they scared! And yet, how much more pain they can endure! And how much more devoted are they to their children!

∴

Why does any extended view from a mountain-top over a broad landscape, no matter what the features of that landscape, awaken in us the emotion of the beautiful? Is it because the eye loves a long range, a broad sweep? Or do we have a sense of victory? The book of the landscape is now open before us, and we can read it page after page. All these weary miles where we tramped, and where the distance, as it were, was in ambush, we now command at a glance. Big views expand the mind as deep inhalations of air expand the lungs.

Yesterday I stood on the top of Grossmont,[1] probably a thousand feet above the landscape, and looked out over a wide expanse of what seemed to be parched, barren country; a few artificial lakes or ponds of impounded rains, but not a green

[1] In San Diego County, California.

thing in sight, and yet I was filled with pleasurable emotion. I lingered and lingered and gazed and gazed. The eye is freed at such times, like a caged bird, and darts far and near without hindrance.

∴

"The wings of time are black and white,
Pied with morning and with night."

Thus do we objectify that which has no objective existence, but is purely a subjective experience. Do we objectify light and sound in the same way? No. One can conceive of the vibrations in the ether that give us the sensation of light, and in the air that give us sound. These vibrations do not depend upon our organs. Time and tide, we say, wait for no man. Certainly the tide does not, as it has a real objective existence. But time does not wait or hurry. It neither lags nor hastens. Yesterday does not exist, nor to-morrow, nor the Now, for that matter. Before we can say the moment has come, it is gone. The only change there is is in our states of consciousness. How the hours lag when we are waiting for a train, and how they hurry when we are happily employed! Can we draw a line between the past and the present? Can you find a point in the current of the stream that is stationary? We speak of being lavish of time and of husbanding time, of improving time, and so on. We divide it into

seconds and minutes, hours and days, weeks, and months, and years. Civilized man is compelled to do this; he lives and works by schedule, but it is his states of consciousness that he divides and measures. "Time is but a stream I go fishing in," says Thoreau. The stream goes by, but the fish stay. The river of Time, the tooth of Time — happy comparisons.

"I wasted time and now time wastes me," says Shakespeare. "I have no time." "You have all there is," replied the old Indian.

If time, like money, could be hoarded up, we could get all our work done. Is there any time outside of man? The animals take no note of time.

∴

That is a good saying of Juvenal's, "He who owns the soil, owns up to the sky." So is this of Virgil's, "Command large fields, but cultivate small ones."

∴

Can there be any theory or doctrine not connected with our practical lives so absurd that it will not be accepted as true by many people? How firmly was a belief in witchcraft held by whole populations for a generation! My grandfather believed in it, and in spooks and hobgoblins.

The belief in alchemy still prevails — that the baser metals, by the aid of the philosopher's stone, can be transmuted into gold and silver. Quite

recently there was a school in a large town in California for teaching alchemy. As it was a failure, its professor was involved in litigation with his pupils. I believe the pupils were chiefly women.

There is a sect in Florida that believe that we live on the inside of a hollow sphere, instead of on the outside of a revolving globe. I visited the community with Edison, near Fort Myers, several years ago. Some of the women were fine-looking. One old lady looked like Martha Washington, but the men all looked "as if they had a screw loose somewhere." They believe that the sun and moon and all the starry hosts of heaven revolve on the inside of this hollow sphere. All our astronomy goes by the board. They look upon it as puerile and contemptible. The founder of the sect had said he would rise from the dead to confirm its truth. His disciples kept his body till the Board of Health obliged them to bury it.

If any one were seriously to urge that we really walk on our heads instead of our heels, and cite our baldness as proof, there are persons who would believe him. It has been urged that flight to the moon in an aëroplane is possible — the want of air is no hindrance! The belief in perpetual motion is not yet dead. Many believe that snakes charm birds. But it has been found that a stuffed snake-skin will "charm" birds also — the bird is hypnotized by its own fear.

∴

What has become of the hermits? — men and women who preferred to live alone, holding little or no intercourse with their fellows? In my youth I knew of several such. There was old Ike Keator, who lived in a little unpainted house beside the road near the top of the mountain where we passed over into Batavia Kill. He lived there many years. He had a rich brother, a farmer in the valley below. Then there was Eri Gray, who lived to be over one hundred years. He occupied a little house on the side of a mountain, and lived, it was said, like the pigs in the pen. Then there was Aunt Deborah Bouton, who lived in a little house by a lonely road and took care of her little farm and her four or five cows, winter and summer. Since I have lived here on the Hudson there was a man who lived alone in an old stone house amid great filth on the top of the hill above Esopus village.

In my own line of descent there was a Kelley who lived alone in a hut in the woods, not far from Albany. I myself must have a certain amount of solitude, but I love to hear the hum of life all about me. I like to be secluded in a building warmed by the presence of other persons.

∴

When I was a boy on the old farm, the bright, warm, midsummer days were canopied with the mellow hum of insects. You did not see them or

distinguish any one species, but the whole upper air resounded like a great harp. It was a very marked feature of midday. But not for fifty years have I heard that sound. I have pressed younger and sharper ears into my service, but to no purpose: there are certainly fewer bumblebees than of old, but not fewer flies or wasps or hornets or honey bees. What has wrought the change I do not know.

∴

If the movements going on around us in inert matter could be magnified so as to come within range of our unaided vision, how agitated the world would seem! The so-called motionless bodies are all vibrating and shifting their places day and night at all seasons. The rocks are sliding down the hills or creeping out of their beds, the stone walls are reeling and toppling, the houses are settling or leaning. All inert material raised by the hand of man above the earth's surface is slowly being pulled down to a uniform level. The crust of the earth is rising or subsiding. The very stars in the constellations are shifting their places.

If we could see the molecular and chemical changes and transformations that are going or around us, another world of instability would be revealed to us. Here we should see real miracles. We should see the odorless gases unite to form water. We should see the building of

crystals, catalysis, and the movements of unstable compounds.

∴

Think of what Nature does with varying degrees of temperature — solids, fluids, gases. From the bottom to the top of the universe means simply more or less heat. It seems like a misuse of words to say that iron freezes at a high temperature, that a bar of red-hot or white-hot iron is frozen. Water freezes at a high temperature, the air freezes at a vastly lower. Carbon dioxide becomes a solid at a very low temperature. Hydrogen becomes a liquid at 252° below zero centigrade, and a solid at 264°. The gas fluorine becomes a liquid at 210° below zero centigrade.

In a world of absolute zero everything would be as solid as the rocks, all life, all chemical reactions would cease. All forms of water are the result of more or less heat. The circuit of the waters from the earth to the clouds and back again, which keeps all the machinery of life a-going, is the work of varying degrees of temperature. The Gulf Stream, which plays such a part in the climate of Europe, is the result of the heat in the Gulf of Mexico. The glacial periods which have so modified the surface of the earth in the past were the result of temperature changes.

∴

How habitually we speak of beauty as a positive

thing, just as we do of truth! whereas what we call beauty is only an emotional experience of our own minds, just as light and heat are sensations of our bodies. There is no light where there is no eye, and no sound where there is no ear. One is a vibration in the ether, and the other a vibration in the air. The vibrations are positive. We do not all see beauty in the same things. One man is unmoved where another is thrilled. We say the world is full of beauty, when we mean that it is full of objects that excite this emotion in our minds.

We speak of truth as if it, too, were a positive thing, and as if there were a fixed quantity of it in the world, as there is of gold or silver, or diamonds. Truth, again, is an intellectual emotion of the human mind. One man's truth is another man's falsehood — moral and æsthetic truth, I mean. Objective truth (mathematics and science) must be the same to all men.

A certain mode of motion in the molecules of matter gives us the sensation of heat, but heat is not a thing, an entity in itself, any more than cold is. Yet to our senses one seems just as positive as the other.

New truth means a new man. There are as many kinds of truth as there are human experiences and temperaments.

∴

How adaptive is animal life! It adds a new

touch of interest to the forbidding cactus to know that the cactus wren builds her nest between its leaves. The spines probably serve to protect the bird from her enemies. But are they not also a menace to her and to her young? But this "procreant cradle" of a bird in the arms of the fanged desert growth softens its aspect a little.

∴

The tree of forbidden fruit — the Tree of Knowledge — how copiously has mankind eaten of it during these latter generations! — and the chaotic state of the world to-day is the result. We have been forcing Nature's hand on a tremendous scale. We have gained more knowledge and power than we can legitimately use. We are drunk with the sense of power. We challenge the very gods. The rapid increase of inventions and the harnessing of the powers of Nature have set all nations to manufacturing vastly more goods than they can use and they all become competitors for world markets, and rivalries and jealousies spring up, and the seeds of war are planted. The rapid growth of towns and cities is one of the results. The sobering and humanizing influence of the country and the farm are less and less in evidence; the excitement, the excesses, the intoxication of the cities are more and more. The follies and extravagances of wealth lead to the insolence and rebellion of the poor. Material power! Drunk with

this power, the world is running amuck to-day. We have got rid of kings and despots and autocratic governments; now if we could only keep sober and make democracy safe and enjoyable! Too much science has brought us to grief. Behold what Chemistry has done to put imperial power in our hands during the last decade!

∴

The grand movements of history and of mankind are like the movements of nature, under the same law, elemental, regardless of waste and ruin and delays — not the result of human will or design, but of forces we wot not of. They are of the same order as floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, a release of human forces that have slumbered. The chaos of Europe to-day shows the play of such elemental forces, unorganized, at cross-purposes, antagonistic, fighting it out in the attempt to find an equilibrium. The pain, the suffering, the waste, the delays, do not trouble the gods at all. Since man is a part of nature, why should not masses of men be ruled by natural law? The human will reaches but a little way.

VIII

GLEANINGS

I do not believe that one poet can or does efface another, as Arnold suggests. As every gas is a vacuum to every other gas, so every new poet is a vacuum to every other poet. Wordsworth told Arnold that for many years his poems did not bring him enough to buy his shoestrings. The reading public had to acquire a taste for him. Whitman said, "I am willing to wait for the growth of the taste of myself." A man who likes a poet of real worth is going to continue to like him, no matter what new man appears. He may not read him over and over, but he goes back to him when the mood is upon him. We listen to the same music over and over. We take the same walk over and over. We read Shakespeare over and over, and we go back to the best in Wordsworth over and over. We get in Tennyson what we do not get in Wordsworth, and we as truly get in Wordsworth what we do not get in Tennyson. Tennyson was sumptuous and aristocratic. Byron found his audience, but he did not rob Wordsworth.

It seems to me that the preëminence of Wordsworth lies in the fact that he deals so entirely with concrete things — men and objects in nature — and floods or saturates them with moral meanings. There is no straining, no hair-splitting, no contortions of the oracle, but it all comes as naturally as the sunrise or the sunset.

∴

Things not beautiful in themselves, or when seen near at hand, may and do give us the sense of beauty when seen at a distance, or in mass. Who has not stood on a mountain-top, and seen before him a wild, disorderly landscape that has nevertheless awakened in him the emotion of the beautiful? or that has given him the emotion of the sublime? Wordsworth's "Daffodils," "Three Years She Grew," "The Solitary Reaper," "The Rainbow," "The Butterfly," and many others are merely beautiful. These lines from Whitman give one the emotion of the sublime:

"I open my scuttle at night and see the far-sprinkled systems,
And all I see multiplied as high as I can cipher edge but the rim of the farther systems.

"Wider and wider they spread, expanding, always expanding,
Outward and outward and forever outward.

"My sun has his sun and round him obediently wheels,
He joins with his partners a group of superior circuit,
And greater sets follow, making specks of the greatest inside them."

All men may slake their thirst at the same spring of water, but all men cannot be thrilled or soothed by beholding the same objects of nature. A beautiful child captivates every one, a beautiful woman ravishes all eyes. On my way to the Imperial Valley, I recently drove across a range of California mountains that had many striking features. A lady asked me if I did not think them beautiful. I said, "No, they are hideous, but the hideous may be interesting."

The snow is beautiful to many persons, but it is not so to me. It is the color of death. I could stand our northern winters very well if I could always see the face of the brown or ruddy earth. The snow, I know, blankets the fields; and Emerson's poem on the snowstorm is fine; at the same time, I would rather not be obliged to look at the white fields.

∴

We are the first great people without a past in the European sense. We are of yesterday. We do not strike our roots down deep into the geology of long-gone ages. We are easily transplanted. We are a mixture of all peoples as the other nations of the world are not. Only yesterday we were foreigners ourselves. Then we made the first experiment on a large scale of a democratic or self-governing people. The masses, and not a privileged few, give the tone and complexion to things

in this country. We have not yet had time to develop a truly national literature or art. We have produced but one poet of the highest order. Whitman is autochthonous. He had no precursor. He is a new type of man appearing in this field.

∴

"What think ye of Whitman?" This is the question I feel like putting, and sometimes do put, to each young poet I meet. If he thinks poorly of Whitman, I think poorly of him. I do not expect great things of him, and so far my test holds good. William Winter thought poorly of Whitman, Aldrich thought poorly of him, and what lasting thing has either of them done in poetry? The memorable things of Aldrich are in prose. Stedman showed more appreciation of him, and Stedman wrote two or three things that will keep. His "Osawatomie Brown . . . he shoved his ramrod down" is sure of immortality. Higginson could not stand Whitman, and had his little fling at him whenever he got the chance. Who reads Higginson now? Emerson, who far outranks any other New England poet, was fairly swept off his feet by the first appearance of "Leaves of Grass." Whittier, I am told, threw the book in the fire. Whittier's fame has not gone far beyond New England. The scholarly and academic Lowell could not tolerate Whitman, and if Lowell has ever written

any true poetry, I have not seen it. What Longfellow thought of him, I do not know. Thoreau saw his greatness at a glance and went to see him. In England, I am told, Tennyson used to read him aloud in select company. I know that the two poets corresponded. We catch a glimpse of Swinburne's spasmodic insight in his first burst of enthusiasm over him, and then of his weakness in recanting. Swinburne's friend and house-mate, Watts Dunton, never could endure him, but what has he done? So it has gone and still is going, though now the acceptance of Whitman has become the fashion.

I have always patted myself on the back for seeing the greatness of Whitman from the first day that I read a line of his. I was bewildered and disturbed by some things, but I saw enough to satisfy me of his greatness.

Whitman had the same faith in himself that Kepler had in his work. Whitman said:

> "Whether I come to my own to-day, or in ten thousand, or ten million years,
> I can cheerfully take it now, or with equal cheerfulness I can wait."

Kepler said: "The die is cast; the book is written, to be read either now or by posterity. I care not which. It may well wait a century for a reader, since God has waited six thousand years for an observer like myself."

∴

Judging from fragments of his letters that I have seen, Henry James was unquestionably hypersensitive. In his dislike of publicity he was extreme to the point of abnormality; it made him ill to see his name in print, except under just the right conditions. He wanted all things veiled and softened. He fled his country, abjured it completely. The publicity of it, of everything in America—its climate, its day, its night, the garish sun, its fierce, blazing light, the manner of its people, its politics, its customs—fairly made him cringe. During his last visit here he tried lecturing, but soon gave it up. He fled to veiled and ripened and cushioned England — not to the country, but to smoky London; and there his hypersensitive soul found peace and ease. He became a British subject, washed himself completely of every vestige of Americanism. This predilection of his probably accounts for the obscurity or tantalizing indirectness of his writings. The last story I read of his was called "One More Turn of the Screw," but what the screw was, or what the turn was, or whether anybody got pinched or squeezed, or what it was all about, I have not the slightest idea. He wrote about his visit here, his trip to Boston, to Albany, to New York, but which town he was writing about you could not infer from the context. He had the gift of a rich,

choice vocabulary, but he wove it into impenetrable, though silken, veils that concealed more than they revealed. When replying to his correspondents on the typewriter, he would even apologize for " the fierce legibility of the type."

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The contrast between the " singing-robes and the overalls of Journalism " is true and striking. Good and true writing no magazine or newspaper editor will blue-pencil. But " fine " writing is a different thing — a style that is conscious of itself, a style in which the thought is commonplace and the language studied and ornate, every judicious editor will blue-pencil. Downrightness and sententiousness are prime qualities; brevity, concreteness, spontaneity — in fact, all forms of genuine expression — help make literature. You know the genuine from the spurious, gold from pinchbeck, that's the rub. The secret of sound writing is not in the language, but in the mind or personality behind the language. The dull writer and the inspired writer use, or may use, the same words, and the product will be gold in the one and lead in the other.

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Dana's book [" Two Years Before the Mast"] is a classic because it took no thought of being a classic. It is a plain, unvarnished tale, not loaded up with tedious descriptions. It is all action, a

perpetual drama in which the sea, the winds, the seamen, the sails — mainsail, main royal, foresail — play the principal parts.

There is no book depicting life on the sea to compare with it. Lately I have again tried to find the secret of its charm. In the first place, it is a plain, unvarnished tale, no attempt at fine writing in it. All is action from cover to cover. It is full of thrilling, dramatic scenes. In fact, it is almost a perpetual drama in which the sea, the winds, the storms, the sails, and the sailors play their parts. Each sail, from the smallest to the greatest, has its own character and its own part to play; sometimes many of them, sometimes few are upon the stage at once. Occasionally all the canvas was piled on at once, and then what a sight the ship was to behold! Scudding under bare poles was dramatic also.

The life on board ship in those times — its humor, its tedium, its dangers, its hardships — was never before so vividly portrayed. The tyranny and cruelty of sea-captains, the absolute despotism of that little world of the ship's deck, stand out in strong relief. Dana had a memory like a phonographic record. Unless he took copious notes on this journey, it is incredible how he could have made it so complete, so specific is the life of each day. The reader craves more light on one point — the size of the ship, her length and tonnage. In

setting out on the homeward journey they took aboard a dozen sheep, four bullocks, a dozen or more pigs, three or four dozen of poultry, thousands of dressed and cured hides, as well as fodder and feed for the cattle and poultry and pigs. The vessel seemed elastic; they could always find room for a few thousand more hides, if the need arose. The hides were folded up like the leaves of a book, and they invented curious machinery to press in a hundred hides where one could not be forced by hand. By this means the forty thousand hides were easily disposed of as part of the home cargo.

The ship becomes a living being to the sailors. The Alert was so loaded, her cargo so *steved* in, that she was stiff as a man in a strait-jacket. But the old sailors said: "Stand by. You'll see her work herself loose in a week or two, and then she'll walk up to Cape Horn like a race-horse."

It is curious how the sailors can't work together without a song. "A song is as necessary to a sailor as the drum and fife are to the soldier. They can't pull in time, or pull with a will, without it." Some songs were much more effective than others. "Two or three songs would be tried, one after the other, with no effect — not an inch could be got upon the tackles, when a new song struck up seemed to hit the humor of the moment and drove the tackles two blocks at once. 'Heave round, hearty!' 'Captain gone ashore!' and the like,

might do for common pulls, but in an emergency, when we wanted a heavy, raise-the-dead pull, which would start the beams of the ship, there was nothing like 'Time for us to go!' 'Round the corner,' or 'Hurrah! Hurrah! my hearty bullies!'"

∴

The mind of the professional critic, like the professional logical mind, becomes possessed of certain rules which it adheres to on all occasions. There is a well-known legal mind in this country which is typical. A recent political opponent of the man says:

> His is the type of mind which would have sided with King John against granting the Magna Charta; the type of mind which would have opposed the ratification of the Constitution of the United States because he would have found so many holes in it. His is the type of mind which would have opposed the Monroe Doctrine on the ground that it was dangerous. His is the type of mind which would have opposed the Emancipation Proclamation on the ground of taking away property without due process of law. His is the type of mind which would have opposed Cleveland's Venezuela message to England on the ground that it was unprecedented. His is the type of mind which did its best in 1912 to oppose Theodore Roosevelt's effort to make the Republican Party progressive.

Such a mind would have no use for Roosevelt, for instance, because Roosevelt was not bound by precedents, but made precedents of his own. The

typical critical mind, such as Arnold's, would deny the title of philosopher to a man who has no constructive talent, who could not build up his own philosophy into a system. He would deny another the title of poet because his verse has not the Miltonic qualities of simplicity, of sensuousness, of passion. Emerson was not a great man of letters, Arnold said, because he had not the genius and instinct for style; his prose had not the requisite wholeness of good tissue. Emerson's prose is certainly not Arnold's prose, but at its best it is just as effective.

∴

It is a good idea of Santayana that " the function of poetry is to emotionalize philosophy."

How absurd, even repulsive, is the argument of " Paradise Lost " ! yet here is great poetry, not in the matter, but in the manner.

"Though fallen on evil days, on evil days though fallen."
"To shun delights and live laborious days."

Common ideas, but what dignity in the expression !

∴

Criticism is easy. When a writer has nothing else to do, he can criticize some other writer. But to create and originate is not so easy. One may say that appreciation is easy also. How many persons appreciate good literature who cannot produce it !

∴

The rash and the audacious are not the same. Audacity means boldness, but to be rash often means to be imprudent or foolhardy. When a little dog attacks a big dog, as so often happens, his boldness becomes rashness. When Charles Kingsley attacked Newman, his boldness turned out to be rashness.

∴

Little wonder that in his essay on "Books" Emerson recommends Thomas à Kempis's "Imitation of Christ." Substitute the word Nature for God and Christ and much of it will sound very Emersonian. Emerson was a kind of New England Thomas à Kempis. His spirit and attitude of mind were essentially the same, only directed to Nature and the modern world. Humble yourself, keep yourself in the background, and let the over-soul speak. "I desire no consolation which taketh from me compunction." "I love no contemplation which leads to pride." "For all that which is high is not holy, nor everything that is sweet, good." "I had rather feel contrition, than be skilled in the definition of it." "All Scripture ought to be read in the spirit in which it was written." How Emersonian all this sounds!

∴

In a fat volume of forty thousand quotations from the literature of all times and countries, com-

piled by some patient and industrious person, at least half of it is not worth the paper on which it is printed. There seem to be more quotations in it from Shakespeare than from any other poet, which is as it should be. There seem to be more from Emerson than from any other American poet, which again is as it should be. Those from the great names of antiquity — the Bible, Sadi, Cicero, Æschylus, Euripides, Aristotle, and others — are all worth while, and the quotations from Bacon, Newton, Addison, Locke, Chaucer, Johnson, Carlyle, Huxley, Tennyson, Goethe are welcome. But the quotations from women writers and poets, — Mrs. Hemans, Mrs. Sigourney, Jean Ingelow, and others, — what are they worth? Who would expect anything profound from J. G. Holland or Chapin, O. W. Holmes, or Alger, or Alcott, or Helps, or Dickens, or Lewes, or Froude, or Lowell? I certainly should not.

Such a selection is good to leaf over. Your thought may be kindled or fanned here and there. The subjects are arranged alphabetically, and embrace nearly all themes of human interest from ability to zephyrs. There is very little from Whitman, and, I think, only one quotation from Thoreau.

∴

The death of Howells gave me a shock. I had known him long, though not intimately. He was my senior by only one month. It had been two

years or more since I had seen him. Last December I read his charming paper on "Eighty Years and After" and enjoyed it greatly. It is a masterpiece. No other American man of letters, past or present, could have done that. In fact, there has been no other American who achieved the all-round literary craftsmanship that Mr. Howells achieved. His equal in his own line we have never seen. His felicity on all occasions was a wonder. His works do not belong to the literature of power, but to the literature of charm, grace, felicity. His style is as flexible and as limpid as a mountain rill. Only among the French do we find such qualities in such perfection. Some of his writings — "Their Wedding Journey," for instance — are too photographic. We miss the lure of the imagination, such as Hawthorne gave to all his pictures of real things. Only one of Howells's volumes have I found too thin for me to finish — his "London Films" was too filmy for me. I had read Taine's "London Notes" and felt the force of a different type of mind. But Howells's "Eighty Years and After" will live as a classic. Oh, the felicity of his style! One of his later poems on growing old ("On a Bright Winter's Day" it is called) is a gem.

IX

SUNDOWN PAPERS

RE-READING BERGSON

I AM trying again to read Bergson's "Creative Evolution," with poor success. When I recall how I was taken with the work ten or more years ago, and carried it with me whenever I went from home, I am wondering if my mind has become too old and feeble to take it in. But I do not have such difficulty with any other of my favorite authors. Bergson's work now seems to me a mixture of two things that won't mix — metaphysics and natural science. It is full of word-splitting and conjuring with terms, and abounds in natural history facts. The style is wonderful, but the logic is not strong. He enlarges upon the inability of the intellect to understand or grasp Life. The reason is baffled, but sympathy and the emotional nature and the intuitions grasp the mystery.

This may be true, the heart often knows what the head does not; but is it not the intellect that tells us so? The intellect understands the grounds of our inability. We can and do reason about the limitations of reason. We do not know how mat-

ter and spirit blend, but we know they do blend. The animals live by instinct, and we live largely in our emotions, but it is reason that has placed man at the head of the animal kingdom.

Bergson himself by no means dispenses with the logical faculty. Note his close and convincing reasoning on the development of the vertebrate eye, and how inadequate the Darwinian idea of the accumulation of insensible variations is to account for it. A closer and more convincing piece of reasoning would be hard to find.

Bergson's conception of two currents — an upward current of spirit and a downward current of matter — meeting and uniting at a definite time and place and producing life, is extremely fanciful. Where had they both been during all the geologic ages? I do not suppose they had been any *where*. How life arose is, of course, one of the great mysteries. But do we not know enough to see that it did not originate in this sudden spectacular way? — that it began very slowly, in unicellular germs?

At first I was so captivated by the wonderful style of M. Bergson, and the richness of his page in natural history, that I could see no flaws in his subject-matter, but now that my enthusiasm has cooled off a little I return to him and am looking closer into the text.

Is not Bergson guilty of false or careless reason-

ing when he says that the relation of the soul to the brain is like that of a coat to the nail upon which it hangs? I call this spurious or pinchbeck analogy. If we know anything about it, do we not know that the relation of the two is not a mechanical or fortuitous one? and that it cannot be defined in this loose way?

"To a large extent," Bergson says, "thought is independent of the brain." "The brain is, strictly speaking, neither an organ of thought, nor of feeling, nor of consciousness." He speaks of consciousness as if it were a disembodied something floating around in the air overhead, like wireless messages. If I do not think with my brain, with what do I think? Certainly not with my legs, or my abdomen, or my chest. I think with my head, or the gray matter of my brain. I look down at the rest of my body and I say, This is part of me, but it is not the real me. With both legs and both arms gone, I should still be I. But cut off my head and where am I?

Has not the intelligence of the animal kingdom increased during the geologic ages with the increase in the size of the brain?

REVISIONS

I HAVE little need to revise my opinion of any of the great names of English literature. I probably make more strenuous demands upon him who

aspires to be a poet than ever before. I see more clearly than ever before that sweetened prose put up in verse form does not make poetry any more than sweetened water put in the comb in the hive makes honey. Many of our would-be young poets bring us the crude nectar from the fields — fine descriptions of flowers, birds, sunsets, and so on — and expect us to accept them as honey. The quality of the man makes all the difference in the world. A great nature can describe birds and flowers and clouds and sunsets and spring and autumn greatly.

Dean Swift quotes Sir Philip Sidney as saying that the "chief life of modern versifying consists in rhyme." Swift agrees with him. "Verse without rhyme," he says, "is a body without a soul, or a bell without a clapper." He thinks Milton's "Paradise Lost" would be greatly improved if it had rhyme. This, he says, would make it "more heroic and sonorous than it is."

Unobtrusive rhyme may be a help in certain cases, but what modern reader would say that a poem without rhyme is a body without a soul? This would exclude many of the noblest productions of English literature.

BERGSON AND TELEPATHY

Bergson seems always to have been more than half-convinced of the truth of spiritualism. When we are already half-convinced of a thing, it takes

but little to convince us. Bergson argues himself into a belief in telepathy in this wise: "We produce electricity at every moment; the atmosphere is continually electrified; we move among magnetic currents. Yet for thousands of years millions of human beings have lived who never suspected the existence of electricity."

Millions of persons have also lived without suspecting the pull of the sun and moon upon us; or that the pressure of the atmosphere upon our bodies is fifteen pounds to the square inch; or that the coast of this part of the continent is slowly subsiding (the oscillations of the earth's crust); or without suspecting the incredible speed of the stars in the midnight sky; or that the earth is turning under our feet; or that electrons are shooting off from the candle or lamp by the light of which we are reading. There are assuredly more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy, many of which we shall doubtless yet find out, and many more of which we shall never find out. Wireless messages may be continually going through our houses and our bodies, and through the air we breathe, and we never suspect them. Shall we, then, infer that the air around us is full of spirits of our departed friends? I hope it is, but I fail to see any warrant for the belief in this kind of reasoning. It does not lend color even to the probability, any more than it

does to the probability that we shall yet be able to read one another's thoughts and become expert mind-readers. Mind-reading seems to be a reality with a few persons, with one in many millions. But I cannot therefore believe in spiritualism as I believe in the "defeat of the Invincible Armada." Fleets have been defeated in all ages. Facts are amenable to observation and experiment,. but merely alleged facts do not stand the laboratory tests.

If memory is not a function of the brain, of what is it a function? If "judgment, reasoning, or any other act of thought" are not functions of the brain, of what are they the functions? The scientific method is adequate to deal with all questions capable of proof or disproof. If we apply the scientific or experimental method to miracles, where does it leave them? Ask Huxley. Thought-transference is possible, but does this prove spiritualism to be true?

I know of a man who can answer your questions if you know the answers yourself, even without reading them or hearing you ask them. He once read a chemical formula for Edison which nobody but Edison had ever seen. I am glad that such things are possible. They confirm our faith in the reality of the unseen. They show us in what a world of occult laws and influences we live, but they tell us nothing of any other world.

METEORIC MEN AND PLANETARY MEN

THERE are meteoric men and there are planetary men. The men who now and then flash across our intellectual heavens, drawing all eyes for the moment, these I call meteoric men. What a contrast they present to the planetary men, who are slow to attract our attention, but who abide, and do not grow dim! Poets like Emerson, Whitman, and Wordsworth were slow to gain recognition, but the radiance of their names grows. I call such a poet as Swinburne meteoric, a poet of a certain kind of brilliant power, but who reads him now? Stephen Phillips with his "Marpessa" had a brief vogue, and then disappeared in the darkness. When I was a young man, I remember, a Scottish poet, Alexander Smith, published a "Life Drama," which dazzled the literary world for a brief period, but it is forgotten now. What attention Kidd's "Social Evolution" attracted a generation or more ago! But it is now quite neglected. It was not sound. When he died a few years ago there was barely an allusion to it in the public press. The same fate befell that talented man, Buckle, with his "Civilization in England." Delia Bacon held the ear of the public for a time with the Bacon-Shakespeare theory. Pulpit men like Joseph Cook and Adirondack Murray blazed out, and then were gone. Half a century ago or more

an Englishman by the name of M. F. Tupper published a book called "Proverbial Philosophy" which had a brief season of popularity, and then went out like a rush-light, or a blaze of tissue paper. Novels like Miss Sprague's "Earnest Trifler," Du Maurier's "Trilby," and Wallace's "Ben Hur" have had their little day, and been forgotten. In the art world the Cubists' crazy work drew the attention of the public long enough for it to be seen how spurious and absurd it was. Brownell's war poems turned out to be little more than brief fireworks. Joaquin Miller, where is he? Fifty years ago Gail Hamilton was much in the public eye, and Grace Greenwood, and Fanny Fern; and in Bohemian circles, there were Agnes Franz and Ada Clare, but they are all quite forgotten now.

The meteoric men would not appreciate President Wilson's wise saying that he would rather fail in a cause that in time is bound to succeed than to succeed in a cause that in time is bound to fail. Such men cannot wait for success. Meteoric men in politics, like Blaine and Conkling, were brilliant men, but were politicians merely. What fruitful or constructive ideas did they leave us? Could they forget party in the good of the whole country? Are not the opponents of the League of Nations of our own day in the same case — without, however, shining with the same degree

of brilliancy? To some of our Presidents — Polk, Pierce, Buchanan — we owe little or nothing. Roosevelt's career, though meteoric in its sudden brilliancy, will shine with a steady light down the ages. He left lasting results. He raised permanently the standard of morality in politics and business in this country by the gospel of the square deal. Woodrow Wilson, after the mists and clouds are all dispelled, will shine serenely on. He is one of the few men of the ages.

THE DAILY PAPERS

Probably the worst feature of our civilization is the daily paper. It scatters crime, bad manners, and a pernicious levity as a wind scatters fire. Crime feeds upon crime, and the newspapers make sure that every criminally inclined reader shall have enough to feed upon, shall have his vicious nature aroused and stimulated. Is it probable that a second and a third President of the United States would ever have been assassinated by shooting, had not such notoriety been given to the first crime? Murder, arson, theft, peculation, are as contagious as smallpox.

Who can help a pitying or a scornful smile when he hears of a school of journalism, a school for promoting crime and debauching the manners and the conscience of the people? — for teaching the gentle art of lying, for manufacturing news when

there is no news? The pupils are taught, I suppose, how to serve up the sweepings from the streets and the gutters and the bar-rooms in the most engaging manner. They are taught how to give the great Public what it wants, and the one thing the great Public wants, and can never get enough of is any form of sensationalism. It clearly loves scandals about the rich, or anything about the rich, because we all want and expect to be rich, to outshine our neighbors, to cut a wide swath in society. Give us anything about the rich, the Public says; we will take the mud from their shoes; if we can't get that, give us the parings of their fingernails.

The inelastic character of the newspaper is a hampering factor — so many columns must be filled, news or no news. And when there is a great amount of important news, see how much is suppressed that but for this inelasticity would have been printed!

The professor at the school of journalism says: "I try to hammer it into them day after day that they have got to learn to get the news — that, whatever else a reporter can or cannot do, he is n't a reporter till he has learned to get the news." Hence the invasion of private houses, the bribery, the stealing of letters, the listening at keyholes, the craze for photographing the most sacred episodes, the betrayals of confidence, that the

newspapers are responsible for. They must get what the dear Public most likes to hear, if they have to scale a man's housetop, and come down his chimney. And if they cannot get the true story, they must invent one. The idle curiosity of the Public must be satisfied.

Now the real news, the news the Public is entitled to, is always easy to get. It grows by the wayside. The Public is entitled to public news, not to family secrets; to the life of the street and the mart, not to life behind closed doors. In the dearth of real news, the paper is filled with the dust and sweepings from the public highways and byways, from saloons, police courts, political halls — sordid, ephemeral, and worthless, because it would never get into print if there were real news to serve up.

Then the advertising. The items of news now peep out at us from between flaming advertisements of the shopmen's goods, like men on the street hawking their wares, each trying to outscream the other and making such a Bedlam that our ears are stunned.[1]

[1] [This fragment is hardly representative of the attitude of Mr. Burroughs toward our worthy dailies, and, could he have expanded the article, it would have had in its entirety a different tone. He lived on the breath of the newspapers; was always eager for legitimate news; and was especially outspoken in admiration of the superb work done by many newspaper correspondents during the World War. Furthermore, he was himself always most approachable and friendly to the reporters,

THE ALPHABET

UNTIL we have stopped to think about it, few of us realize what it means to have an alphabet — the combination of a few straight lines and curves which form our letters. When you have learned these, and how to arrange them into words, you have the key that unlocks all the libraries in the world. An assortment and arrangement of black lines on a white surface! These lines mean nothing in themselves; they are not symbols, nor pictures, nor hieroglyphics, yet the mastery of them is one of the touchstones of civilization. The progress of the race since the dawn of history, or since the art of writing has been invented, has gone forward with leaps and bounds. The prehistoric races, and the barbarous races of our own times, had and have only picture language.

The Chinese have no alphabet. It is said that they are now accepting a phonetic alphabet. The Chinese system of writing comprises more than forty thousand separate symbols, each a different word. It requires the memorizing of at least three thousand word-signs to read and write their

complaining, however, that they often failed to quote him when he took real pains to help them get things straight; while they often insisted on emphasizing sensational aspects, and even put words in his mouth which he never uttered. But the truth is, he valued the high-class newspapers, though regarding even them as a two-edged sword, since their praiseworthy efforts are so vitiated by craze for the sensational. — C. B.]

language. The national phonetic script is made up of sixty distinct characters that answer to our twenty-four. These characters embrace every verbal sound of the language, and in combination make up every word. The progress of China has been greatly hampered by this want of an alphabet.

Coleridge says about the primary art of writing: "First, there is mere gesticulation, then rosaries, or wampum, then picture language, then hieroglyphics, and finally alphabetic letters," — the last an evolution from all that went before. But there is no more suggestion of an alphabet in the sign language of the North American Indian than there is of man in a crinoid.

THE REDS OF LITERATURE

A CLASS of young men who seem to look upon themselves as revolutionary poets has arisen, chiefly in Chicago; and they are putting forth the most astonishing stuff in the name of free verse that has probably ever appeared anywhere. In a late number of "Current Opinion," Carl Sandburg, who, I am told, is their chosen leader, waves his dirty shirt in the face of the public in this fashion:

"My shirt is a token and a symbol more than a cover from sun and rain,
My shirt is a signal and a teller of souls,
I can take off my shirt and tear it, and so make a ripping razzly noise, and the people will say, 'Look at him tear his shirt!'

"I can keep my shirt on,
I can stick around and sing like a little bird, and look 'em all in the eye and never be fazed,
I can keep my shirt on."

Does not this resemble poetry about as much as a pile of dirty rags resembles silk or broadcloth? The trick of it seems to be to take flat, unimaginative prose and cut it up in lines of varying length, and often omit the capitals at the beginning of the lines — "shredded prose," with no "kick" in it at all. These men are the "Reds" of literature. They would reverse or destroy all the recognized rules and standards upon which literature is founded. They show what Bolshevism carried out in the field of poetry, would lead to. One of them who signs himself H. D. writes thus in the "Dial" on "Helios":

"Helios makes all things right —
night brands and chokes,
as if destruction broke
over furze and stone and crop
of myrtle-shoot and field-wort,
destroyed with flakes of iron,
the bracken-stone,
where tender roots were sown
blight, chaff, and wash
of darkness to choke and drown.

"A curious god to find,
yet in the end faithful;
bitter, the Kyprian's feet —
ah, flecks of withered clay,
great hero, vaunted lord —
ah, petals, dust and windfall
on the ground — queen awaiting queen."

What it all means — who can tell? It is as empty of intelligent meaning as a rubbish-heap. Yet these men claim to get their charter from Whitman. I do not think Whitman would be enough interested in them to feel contempt toward them. Whitman was a man of tremendous personality, and every line he wrote had a meaning, and his whole work was suffused with a philosophy as was his body with blood.

These Reds belong to the same class of inane sensationalists that the Cubists do; they would defy in verse what the Cubists defy in form.

I have just been skimming through an illustrated book called "Noa Noa," by a Frenchman, which describes, or pretends to describe, a visit to Tahiti. There is not much fault to be found with it as a narrative, but the pictures of the natives are atrocious. Many of the figures are distorted, and all of them have a smutty look, as if they had been rubbed with lampblack or coal-dust. There is not one simple, honest presentation of the natural human form in the book. When the Parisian becomes a degenerate, he is the most degenerate of all — a refined, perfumed degenerate. A degenerate Englishman may be brutal and coarse, but he could never be guilty of the inane or the outrageous things which the Cubists, the Imagists, the Futurists, and the other Ists among the French have turned out. The degenerate Frenchman is like

our species of smilax which looks fresh, shining, and attractive, but when it blooms gives out an odor of dead rats.

I recently chanced upon the picture of a kneeling girl, by one of the Reds in art, a charcoal sketch apparently. It suggests the crude attempts of a child. The mouth is a black, smutty hole in the face, the eyes are not mates, and one of them is merely a black dot. In fact, the whole head seems thrust up into a cloud of charcoal dust. The partly nude body has not a mark of femininity. The body is very long and the legs very short, and the knees, as they protrude from under the drapery, look like two irregular blocks of wood.

To falsify or belie nature seems to be the sole aim of these creatures. The best thing that could happen to the whole gang of them would be to be compelled to go out and dig and spade the earth. They would then see what things are really like.

THE EVOLUTION OF EVOLUTION

It is interesting to note that the doctrine of evolution itself has undergone as complete an evolution as has any animal species with which it deals. We find the germ of it, so to speak, in the early Greek philosophers and not much more. Crude, half-developed forms of it begin to appear in the eighteenth century of our era and become more and more developed in the nineteenth, till they

approximate completion in Darwin. In Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire in 1795 there are glimpses of the theory, but in Lamarck, near the beginning of the nineteenth century, the theory is so fully developed that it anticipates Darwin on many points; often full of crudities and absurdities, yet Lamarck hits the mark surprisingly often. In 1813 Dr. W. C. Wells, an Englishman, read a paper before the Royal Society in London that contains a passage that might have come from the pages of Darwin. In the anonymous and famous volume called "Vestiges of Creation," published in 1844, the doctrine of the mutability of species is forcibly put. Then in Herbert Spencer in 1852 the evolution theory of development receives a fresh impetus, till it matures in the minds of Darwin and Wallace in the late fifties. The inherent impulse toward development is also in Aristotle. It crops out again in Lamarck, but was repudiated by Darwin.

FOLLOWING ONE'S BENT

I HAVE done what I most wanted to do in the world, what I was probably best fitted to do, not as the result of deliberate planning or calculation, but by simply going with the current, that is, following my natural bent, and refusing to run after false gods. Riches and fame and power, when directly pursued, are false gods. If a man deliberately says to himself, "I will win these things,"

he has likely reckoned without his host. His host is the nature within and without him, and that may have something to say on the subject. But if he says, "I will do the worthy work that comes to my hand, the work that my character and my talent bring me, and I will do it the best I can," he will not reap a barren harvest.

So many persons are disappointed in life! They have had false aims. They have wanted something for nothing. They have listened to the call of ambition and have not heeded the inner light. They have tried short cuts to fame and fortune, and have not been willing to pay the price in self-denial that all worthy success demands. We find our position in life according to the specific gravity of our moral and intellectual natures.

NOTES ON THE PSYCHOLOGY OF OLD AGE [1]

The physiology of old age is well understood — general sluggishness of all the functions, stiffness of the joints, more or less so-called rheumatism, loss of strength, wasting tissues, broken sleep, failing hearing and eyesight, capricious appetite, and so on. But the psychology of old age is not so easily described. The old man reasons well, the judgment is clear, the mind active, the conscience alert, the interest in life unabated. It is the memory

[1] [These fragments, which Mr. Burroughs intended to expand into an article, were among the very last things he wrote. — C. B.]

that plays the old man tricks. His mind is a storehouse of facts and incidents and experiences, but they do not hold together as they used to; their relations are broken and very uncertain. He remembers the name of a person, but perhaps cannot recall the face or presence; or he remembers the voice and presence, but without the name or face. He may go back to his school-days and try to restore the faded canvas of those distant days. It is like resurrecting the dead; he exhumes them from their graves: There was G——; how distinctly he recalls the name and some incident in his school life, and that is all. There was B——, a name only. There was R——, and the memory of the career he had marked out for himself and his untimely death through a steamboat accident; but of his looks, his voice — not a vestige! It is a memory full of holes, like a net with many of the meshes broken. He recalls his early teachers, some of them stand out vividly — voice, look, manner — all complete. Others are only names associated with certain incidents in school.

Names and places with which one has been perfectly familiar all his life suddenly, for a few moments, mean nothing. It is as if the belt slipped, and the wheel did not go round. Then the next moment, away it goes again! Or, shall we call it a kind of mental anæsthesia, or mental paralysis? Thus, the other day I was reading

something about Georgetown, South America. I repeated the name over to myself a few times. "Have I not known such a place some time in my life? Where is it? Georgetown? Georgetown?" The name seemed like a dream. Then I thought of Washington, the Capital, and the city above it, but had to ask a friend if the name was Georgetown. Then suddenly, as if some chemical had been rubbed on a bit of invisible writing, out it came! Of course it was Georgetown. How could I have been in doubt about it? (I had lived in Washington for ten years.)

So we say, old age may reason well, but old age does not remember well. This is a commonplace. It seems as if memory were the most uncertain of all our faculties.

Power of attention fails, which we so often mistake for deafness in the old. It is the mind that is blunted and not the ear. Hence we octogenarians so often ask for your question over again. We do not grasp it the first time. We do not want you to speak louder, we only need to focus upon you a little more completely.

Of course both sight and hearing are a little blunted in old age. But for myself I see as well as ever I did, except that I have to use spectacles in reading; but nowadays the younger observers hear the finer sounds in nature that sometimes escape me.

THE LAST HARVEST

Some men mellow with age, others harden, but the man who does not in some way ripen is in a bad way. Youth makes up in sap and push what it lacks in repose.

To grow old gracefully is the trick.

To me one of the worst things about old age is that one has outlived all his old friends. The Past becomes a cemetery.

"As men grow old," said Rochefoucauld, "they grow more foolish and more wise" — wise in counsel, but foolish in conduct. "There is no fool like an old fool," said Tennyson, but it is equally true that there is no fool like the young fool. If you want calm and ripe wisdom, go to middle age.

As an octogenarian, I have found it interesting to collate many wise sayings of many wise men on youth and age.[1]

Cicero found that age increased the pleasure of conversation. It is certainly true that in age we do find our tongues, if we have any. They are unloosed, and when the young or the middle-aged sit silent, the octogenarian is a fountain of conversation. In age one set of pleasures is gone and another takes its place.

Emerson published his essay on "Old Age" while he was yet in the middle sixties, and I recall

[1] [Here followed several pages of quotations from the ancients and moderns. — C. B.]

that in the "Emerson-Carlyle Correspondence" both men began to complain of being old before they were sixty. Scott was old before his time, and Macaulay too. Scott died at sixty-one, Macaulay at fifty-nine, Tennyson at eighty-three, Carlyle at eighty-six, Emerson at seventy-nine, Amiel at sixty.

I have heard it said that it is characteristic of old age to reverse its opinions and its likes and dislikes. But it does not reverse them; it revises them. If its years have been well spent, it has reached a higher position from which to overlook life. It commands a wider view, and the relation of the parts to the whole is more clearly seen. . . .

"Old age superbly rising"—Whitman.

Age without decrepitude, or remorse, or fear, or hardness of heart!

FACING THE MYSTERY

I WISH there were something to light up the grave for me, but there is not. It is the primal, unending darkness. The faith of all the saints and martyrs does not help me. I must see the light beyond with my own eyes. Whitman's indomitable faith I admire, but cannot share. My torch will not kindle at his great flame. From our youth up our associations with the dead and with the grave are oppressive. Our natural animal instincts get the better of us. Death seems the great catas-

trophe. The silver cord is loosened, and the golden bowl is broken. The physical aspects of death are unlovely and repellent. And the spiritual aspects — only the elect can see them. Our physical senses are so dominant, the visible world is so overpowering, that all else becomes as dreams and shadows.

I know that I am a part of the great cosmic system of things, and that all the material and all the forces that make up my being are as indestructible as the great Cosmos itself — all that is physical must remain in some form. But consciousness, the real Me, is not physical, but an effect of the physical. It is really no more a thing than "a child's curlicue cut by a burnt stick in the night," and as the one is evanescent, why not the other?

Nature is so opulent, so indifferent to that we hold most precious, such a spendthrift, evokes such wonders from such simple materials! Why should she conserve souls, when she has the original stuff of myriads of souls? She takes up, and she lays down. Her cycles of change, of life and death, go on forever. She does not lay up stores; she is, and has, all stores, whether she keep or whether she waste. It is all the same to her. There is no outside, no beyond, to her processes and possessions. There is no future for her, only an everlasting present. What is the very bloom and

fragrance of humanity to the Infinite? In the yesterday of geologic time, humanity was not. In the to-morrow of geologic time, it will not be. The very mountains might be made of souls, and all the stars of heaven kindled with souls, such is the wealth of Nature in what we deem so precious, and so indifferent is she to our standards of valuation.

This I know, too: that the grave is not dark or cold to the dead, but only to the living. The light of the eye, the warmth of the body, still exist undiminished in the universe, but in other relations, under other forms. Shall the flower complain because it fades and falls? It has to fall before the fruit can appear. But what is the fruit of the flower of human life? Surely not the grave, as the loose thinking of some seem to imply. The only fruit I can see is in fairer flowers, or a higher type of mind and life that follows in this world, and to which our lives may contribute. The flower of life has improved through the ages — the geologic ages; from the flower of the brute, it has become the flower of the man. You and I perish, but something goes out, or may go out, from us that will help forward a higher type of mankind. To what end? Who knows? We cannot cross-question the Infinite. Something in the universe has eventuated in man, and something has profited by his ameliorations. We must regard him as a legitimate product, and we must look upon death

as a legitimate part of the great cycle — an evil only from our temporary and personal point of view, but a good from the point of view of the whole.

THE END

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